

Europe and China in the Cold War

New Perspectives on the Cold War

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Europe and China in the Cold War

*Exchanges Beyond the Bloc Logic and
the Sino-Soviet Split*

Edited by

Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl

Marco Wyss

Valeria Zanier



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Europe and China in the Cold War: Exchanges Beyond the Bloc Logic and the Sino-Soviet Split

Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, Marco Wyss and Valeria Zanier

Once the Cold War dynamics had thoroughly engulfed the nascent People's Republic of China (PRC) with the military intervention in Korea in October 1950, China's relations with divided Europe were cast in a new light. These relations, which evolved outside of the main international power nexus, have for a long time been summarised as a story of Eastern bloc versus Western bloc confrontation. Only very recently has a new generation of historians begun to re-examine past assumptions meticulously and integrate the history of Sino-European relations in the Cold War within a global framework.¹ This fresh scholarship demonstrates that relations between the PRC and European countries were much more intense than was previously thought.

In the wake of the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty, Eastern Europe followed Moscow's lead and rapidly established close relations with Beijing. Yet what was supposed to be an unbreakable and eternal partnership between the USSR and the PRC was marked by frictions from the beginning. Following the death of Stalin in 1953 and the rise of Nikita Khrushchev, this partnership rapidly disintegrated on largely ideological and political grounds. By the early 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split was complete, and the two Communist behemoths entered into a period of increasingly open hostility.² This dramatically and adversely affected China's relations with Eastern Europe, notably because most Soviet 'satellites' believed they had no other choice than to side with Moscow. This book shows, however, that the impact of the Sino-Soviet split needs to be qualified in relation not only to Eastern, but also Western Europe. Whereas the

1 See especially Enrico Fardella, Christian F. Ostermann and Charles Kraus, eds., *Sino-European Relations During the Cold War and the Rise of a Multipolar World: A Critical Oral History* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2015); and Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll, eds., *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017).

2 Odd Arne Westad, *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–63* (Washington D.C. and Stanford CA: Woodrow Wilson Center and Stanford University Press, 1998); Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Chapter 3. See also, for instance, Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Soviet bloc countries did not always imitate Moscow's relations with Beijing, the Sino-Soviet split provided a springboard for closer relations between Western Europe and China.

The Chinese authorities did not only try to retain a foothold in Eastern Europe, but also to transcend the Iron Curtain and expand their reach into Western Europe.³ It was indeed in the first half of the 1960s that China began to import technology and grain from Western European countries.⁴ This short-lived period was favoured by the lessening of tensions in Europe, transatlantic – especially Franco-American – disagreements, and culminated in the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and China. While China's opening to Western imports was indeed necessary to remedy the tragic consequences of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960), it also led to a new approach towards the West that had its origins in earlier exchanges. This rapprochement temporarily halted during the chaotic and violent years of the Cultural Revolution. But thereafter, it not only continued, but also received an additional boost through the decisive liberalization agenda advanced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978.⁵ The increasingly close relations between Europe and China were in tune with the thaw in Sino-US relations following President Richard Nixon's visit to the PRC, and remained driven by China's hostility towards the Soviet Union, which in 1969 had led to the Sino-Soviet border conflict.

Yet the United States and Western Europe did not always see eye to eye when it came to the PRC, and China's foreign relations were not solely determined by its relationship with the Soviet Union. New research has shown that even before the Sino-Soviet split broke out into the open, the PRC did not strictly follow in the footsteps of Moscow, and neither were European policies on both sides of the Iron Curtain modelled on the US-dominated or Soviet dogmas.⁶ Therefore, already in the early Cold War there was room for innovative contacts in the political, cultural, technological and economic spheres of

3 Martin Albers, *Britain, France, West Germany and the People's Republic of China, 1969–1982: The European Dimension of China's Great Transition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); *Cold War History* 17, no. 2 (2017), Special Issue edited by Martin Albers and Chen Zhongzhong: 'Socialism, Capitalism and Sino-European Relations in the Deng Xiaoping Era, 1978–1992'.

4 Chad J. Mitcham, *China's Economic Relations with the West and Japan, 1949–79: Grain, Trade, and Diplomacy* (London and New York: Routledge 2005); and Alexander Eckstein, *China's Economic Development: The Interplay of Scarcity and Ideology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975).

5 While the Cultural Revolution lasted until 1976 (the year of Mao's death), it is in the years from 1966 to 1968 that most violent disruption happened, in some cases also leading to the temporary ousting of central political authority.

6 See *Modern Asia Studies* 51, no. 1 (2017), Special issue edited by Angela Romano and Valeria Zanier: 'Circumventing the Cold War. The Parallel Diplomacy of Economic and Cultural Exchanges between Western Europe and Socialist China in the 1950s'.

Sino-European interactions. In the case of Western Europe, this was notably facilitated by the Korean armistice (1953) and the PRC's participation in the 1954 Geneva Conference.

This book delves further into these realities by looking at Sino-European relations over the whole Cold War period. The collected chapters focus on new questions, on less explored bilateral paths and extra-diplomatic exchanges, and especially on the essential role played by non-state actors in these relations.⁷ By disregarding the traditional separation in Cold War historiography between Eastern and Western Europe, the authors of this volume render a more global picture of Sino-European interactions, and thereby provide the basis for a comparative analysis that transcends the Iron Curtain.⁸ They draw on a multitude of international archival sources, including collections of governmental papers, political parties, associations, as well as biographies of political leaders and other influential personalities. The only limitation is the small number of Chinese sources, which, however, is mainly due to currently restricted access to Chinese archives. The chapters examine three distinct problems dealt with in three different sections: firstly, the unexplored relations between Western Europe and China; secondly, the questions of ideology, propaganda and people-to-people relations; and thirdly, China's role in the European Soviet bloc.

1 Unexplored Relations between Western Europe and China

During the four decades following the Communist revolution, Western Europe was greatly influenced by three different international dynamics that superimposed themselves over Cold War developments. Firstly, the imperial past and the process of decolonisation deeply affected Cold War relations between the PRC and Britain, France and to a lesser extent West Germany as recent research has shown.⁹ As has been pointed out by Martin Albers, all three nations had acted as imperialist powers in China in the nineteenth century, with Britain at the forefront of the economic and financial offensive and maintaining its

7 Initial versions of most of the book's chapters were presented at a conference entitled 'The Smaller European Powers and China in the Cold War, 1949–1989', at the University of Lausanne in November 2016, organized by Sandra Bott, Claude Hauser, Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl and Marco Wyss.

8 This was also the approach of the recent special issue of *Cold War History*. See: Albers and Chen (2017).

9 Cf. Robert Bickers, *Out of China: How the Chinese Ended the Era of Western Domination* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

imperial role until the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997.¹⁰ Smaller Western European powers followed in the backwaters of the French and British incursions to engage in exchanges with China. This imperial legacy explained the important involvement of European businesspeople, immigrants and churches in China at the time of the Communist revolution in 1949. These close-interest ties were undoubtedly a driving factor for early diplomatic recognition of the new People's Republic by Britain, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries, and their refusal to follow Washington's policy of non-recognition despite their being closely integrated into the Western orbit.

As Ariane Knüsel argues in her chapter, this early recognition of the PRC by Switzerland, together with the fact that it was not actually perceived as an imperial power by Beijing, helped it become probably the most important hub for New China's diplomatic and business networks in Western Europe during the 1950s and of Maoist networks during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). This unique role was also made possible by the country's official neutrality and the fact that many international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), had their world-wide or European headquarters in Geneva. Consequently, the Chinese embassy and trade office in Bern as well as the Consulate in Geneva were of strategic importance to Beijing's efforts of improving political and economic relations with other Western European powers, as well as with African and Latin American diplomats. Moreover, Switzerland was at the heart of the global diffusion of Maoist propaganda and of China's Western European spy network, serving notably to gather intelligence on Taiwanese nationals.

The interest in Switzerland as a facilitator of Sino-European connections was shared by Western European governments, as Knüsel shows. As is mentioned in Dionysios Chourchoulis' chapter on Sino-Greek relations after official recognition in 1972, the Greek military junta's first secret efforts to establish official relations with communist China also took place in Bern, as well as in Paris. As a matter of fact, with the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and the PRC in 1964, the Chinese embassy in Paris began to play an important role in Sino-European exchanges, and the subsequent wave of official recognitions of Maoist China by Western European countries after the former's admission to the United Nations in 1971 mostly put an end to Switzerland's importance as a hub for Sino-European contacts.

Another international dynamic that determined Sino-Western European relations were several regional alliances Western European countries entered, among which figured not only the North Atlantic Treaty signed in 1949, but also the different agreements resulting from European integration. The process

¹⁰ Albers, *Britain, France*, pp. 13–17.

of European integration was arguably accelerated by China's participation in the Korean War in 1950 and went on to change the institutional configuration in Sino-European interactions. Thus, the European Economic Community (EEC) established in 1958 entered into official diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1975, in the context of Détente, and a major Sino-EEC trade agreement was concluded three years later.¹¹ The chapters in this first part of the book shed light on the role of three countries that did not belong to the EEC during the major part of the Cold War – Switzerland, Austria and Greece (which joined in 1981) – and whose relations with Beijing were thus established in alternative institutional frameworks. Since Switzerland and Austria were not North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members either, their ties to the PRC allow for further understanding of the role neutral European countries played in the Cold War.¹²

In this regard, it is interesting to note that Austria did not follow Switzerland's lead in early recognition of communist China, as Maximilian Graf and Wolfgang Mueller demonstrate in their chapter, despite Beijing's acclaim of the Austrian State Treaty of May 1955 and its wish to take up official relations. The reasons the Austrian government decided against recognition until 1971 were mainly linked to its fear of endangering relations with the United States and the Republic of China (ROC), notably in view of its interest in becoming host to the International Atomic Energy Agency. However, as Graf and Mueller argue, the lack of official relations did not prevent different types of other Sino-Austrian exchanges from taking place, notably between Communist party members, journalists and businessmen.

The case of Sino-Greek relations after the establishment of official relations in 1972, analysed by Chourchoulis, takes a new approach to Beijing's attitude towards NATO and the EEC. While the motivation of the Greek military dictatorship in establishing official relations with Maoist China was primarily due to a growing sense of Greek isolation from Western Europe, Beijing was acting out of concern about increased Soviet military presence in the Mediterranean. The wish to establish a bulwark against Moscow in South-eastern Europe furthermore led the Chinese authorities to support a strengthening of NATO in the region and later to encourage Greece's efforts to join the EEC. It also

11 Francis Snyder, *The European Union and China, 1949–2008: Basic Documents and Commentary* (Oxford and Portland OR: Hart Publishing, 2009).

12 The question of the Neutrals and Non-Aligned in the Cold War has been explored recently in a special issue of the *International History Review* 37, no. 5 (2015): 'Beyond and Between the Cold War Blocs', edited by Sandra Bott, Jussi Hanhimäki, Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl and Marco Wyss, as well as in a book by the same editors, *Between or Within the Blocs? Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

accounted for Beijing's avoidance of taking any official position in the conflict between Greece and Turkey after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and the fall of the Greek military junta.

A third international development affecting Sino-Western European relations during the Cold War was the phenomenal economic growth in Western Europe after the post-war reconstruction. The PRC underwent a parallel surge in economic development, despite some reversals during the 1960s, transforming it into an economic superpower by the end of the Cold War. As recent research has demonstrated, most Western European countries were highly interested in the Chinese market from 1950 onwards, with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) establishing particularly intense trade dealings despite the absence of diplomatic relations,¹³ closely followed by Britain, while other major economic powers such as France and Italy joined in this scramble for participation in the Chinese commercial expansion.¹⁴ In this regard, it is also significant that from the beginning most Western European countries were reticent to participate in the US-led trade embargo on China, embodied by the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCoM) section called the China Committee (ChinCom) that controlled the export of strategic goods and goods on the encompassing 'China differential list'. Privileging trade interests over political considerations, Britain took the lead among Western European countries in abolishing the differential restrictions in 1957.¹⁵

The ambition of gaining (or maintaining) access to the Chinese market also played a determinant role for Switzerland, Austria and Greece in their decision to recognize Beijing. Corporate leaders were at the forefront of these contacts with China, in Austria in particular the State-owned Iron and Steel company,

13 See Albers, *Britain, France*, p. 67 and Giovanni Bernardini, 'Principled Pragmatism: The Eastern Committee of German Economy and West German–Chinese Relations During the Early Cold War, 1949–1958', *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 1 (2017): pp. 78–106.

14 On French economic relations with the PRC see Thierry Robin, *Le Coq face au Dragon. Deux décennies de relations économiques franco-chinoises de la fin de la Seconde guerre mondiale au milieu des années 1960* (Geneva: Droz, 2013); and Laurent Césari and Denis Varaschin, eds., *Les relations franco-chinoises au vingtième siècle et leurs antécédents* (Arras: Artois presses université, 2003). On the establishment of Sino-Italian trade relations see Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni, 'The China Question in Italian Foreign Policy', *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 1 (2017): pp. 107–132; and Enrico Fardella, 'A Significant Periphery of the Cold War: Italy-China Bilateral Relations, 1949–1989', *Cold War History* 17, no. 2 (2017): pp. 181–197.

15 See Zhang Shuguang, *Economic Cold War. America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949–1963* (Washington D.C.: Cold War International History Project, 2002), pp. 113–173; and Frank Cain, 'The US-Led Trade Embargo on China: The Origins of Chincom, 1947–52', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 18, no. 4 (1995): pp. 33–54.

and in Greece the powerful shipping lobby, which by 1971 was handling more than a fifth of Chinese cargoes. As in Sino-Italian relations in 1964,¹⁶ the opening of a Chinese trade office in Vienna in 1965 and its counterpart in Beijing a year later played an important role in business dealings before the establishment of diplomatic ties.

However, the Austrian, Swiss and Greek hopes of greatly expanding economic relations with China did not materialize, as general trade remained relatively modest. In the case of Austria, despite the Austrian government's reliance on soft-power instruments such as cultural exchange and tourism to further economic relations, overall trade only improved slightly after recognition. Between Greece and the post-Mao Chinese leadership political and economic ties also remained relatively modest for different reasons, although they were friendly in general, until they deteriorated substantially with the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Further research into other aspects of these economic exchanges, such as direct investments and financial relations, is needed to draw any general conclusions, but it can safely be assumed that it was in the framework of these diverse exchanges between the PRC and the Western European powers that the seeds were planted for the later surge in Sino-European economic relations.¹⁷

2 Transnational Networks, Propaganda, and People-to-People Relations

Recent scholarship has shown that because of the tight political constraints proper to the Cold War framework, non-governmental relations played a very important role in East-West interactions.¹⁸ Through these ties, it was possible for Communist sympathizers, as well as for artists, intellectuals and businessmen, to build protected spaces in which they could develop dialogues. Scholars have revealed how such non-official relations in reality were given directions by governmental actors of Socialist countries, while at the same time non-official actors from the West were also integrated with political currents and leaders. By far and large, such relations were substantially more organized on the

¹⁶ See Meneguzzi Rostagni 'The China Question'.

¹⁷ On this question, see also Albers and Chen, 'Socialism, Capitalism and Sino-European Relations'.

¹⁸ Romano and Zanier, 'Circumventing the Cold War'; see also the essays published in Guido Samarani and Sofia Graziani, eds., 'Essays from the International Symposium on Italy, Europe and China during the Cold War Years', special section, *Lengzhan guojishi yanjiu* 19, no. 20 (2015).

Socialist side, where they were systematically sought after. It has been highlighted elsewhere that the main architects of such strategies were Zhou Enlai, the long-time Chinese Premier and Foreign Affairs Minister, and Liao Chengzhi, the top policy expert on Japan, as well as a leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) youth organization and Vice-Chairman of China's Peace Committee.¹⁹ While there have been pioneering analyses on Sino-Japanese interactions, the study of non-official relations between China and Europe has still yielded limited results.²⁰ This further enhances the value of the four chapters introduced in this section, which address these ties in terms of ideological dialogue, political propaganda, transnational networks and 'people to people diplomacy'.

This section analyses four European countries: Britain, France, Switzerland and Italy; and an Asian territory, Hong Kong, at the time a British colony, and now an integral part of China. As mentioned above, two countries – Britain and Switzerland – had recognized the PRC very early on in 1950, France would do so in 1964, and Italy in 1972. As a matter of fact, neither the Swiss nor the British decision were the result of a process of political rapprochement. Bern's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC was not only supposed to be in line with official neutrality and the related maxim of universality, but also to protect Switzerland's business interests. More generally, the Swiss were, as illustrated by their secret dealings with the United States and other leading NATO countries, clearly western neutrals.²¹ London's recognition of the PRC was decided early on, mainly to secure control over Hong Kong and to safeguard commercial primacy in East Asia. In fact, Sino-British relations remained problematic for more than twenty years and the two countries only exchanged ambassadors in 1972 after Nixon's opening.²² The chapters by Cyril Cordoba and Liu Kaixuan, and Chi-kwan Mark offer new

19 Mayumi Itoh, *The Making of China's Peace with Japan: What Xi Jinping should learn from Zhou Enlai* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Wu Xuewen 吴学文, *Liao Chengzhi yu Riben* 廖承志与日本 [Liao Chengzhi and Japan] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2007); Donald W. Klein and Anne B. Clark, *Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

20 See for example Amy King, *China-Japan Relations after World War Two: Empire, Industry and War, 1949–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Casper Wits, 'The Japan Group: Managing China's People's Diplomacy Toward Japan in the 1950s', *East Asia* 33, no. 2 (March 2016): pp. 91–110.

21 For instance, in July 1951, the Swiss authorities passed a secret oral agreement with the US government that they would largely follow the CoCom embargo on the export of strategic and military goods to Eastern Bloc countries. See André Schaller, *Schweizer Neutralität im West-Ost Handel. Das Hotz-Linder Agreement vom 23. Juli 1951* (Bern: Verlag P. Haupt, 1987).

22 Chi-kwan Mark, *The Everyday Cold War: Britain and China, 1950–1972* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

evidence and a fresh interpretation of how these two controversial situations were managed at the official and non-official levels. Conversely, France and Italy did not have official relations with China for a longer part of the Cold War. However, in comparison, their civil societies were more susceptible to succumb to the fascination of Mao's China. This was mainly due to the strength of the Communist parties and of other leftist movements in the two countries.

The chapter by Cordoba and Liu represents the first effort to shed light on pro-Communist China friendship associations in France (*Association des amitiés franco-chinoises*, AAFC) and Switzerland (first called 'Knowledge of China', then more explicitly named 'Friendship with China'). The story of the friendship associations in the two countries reveals quite different aspects. In France, the AAFC maintained that they could help to create favourable conditions for establishing diplomatic relations between France and China, whereas in Switzerland the main aim of the associations was to create a more positive attitude towards China in order to offset the strict surveillance exerted by the Swiss government on any pro-leftist activists and activities. The French Communist party (PCF) offered substantial political backing to the AAFC, the board of which included members of the PCF. The Swiss 'friends of China' frequently consulted with French representatives because of the latter's superior knowledge of the Chinese political situation, and their better integration into the Communist movement. The chapter thus offers new interpretations on how Revolutionary China made its way into European cultural history from the early enthusiastic years of the Socialist construction to the eccentric dogmatism of the Cultural Revolution.

Guido Samarini's chapter conveys the picture of an Italian Communist Party (PCI) greatly involved in the sub-state party-to-party diplomacy in the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Drawing from personal memoirs and party archives, the chapter documents the period from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, when both the PCI and the CCP harboured optimistic views about the future of the world after the end of the war in Korea, the Geneva Conference and the Bandung Conference. It was within such a context that the exchange of delegations between the two parties occurred for the first time in 1956. Friendly visits of political leaders continued until the end of the decade, providing interesting occasions for the Italians to see the new China with their own eyes. The last PCI delegation visited China in 1961. However, at that point, ideological divergences had started to drive a wedge between the two parties. Soon after, as the Sino-Soviet split became irreversible, PCI-CCP relations froze due to their conflicting views on some fundamental questions, such as war and peace, peaceful coexistence, or the transition from capitalism to socialism. However, even during the 1960s the PCI continued and even

intensified its political and parliamentary efforts towards Italy's recognition of the People's Republic of China.

The Italian Communists also are at the centre of Sofia Graziani's chapter, although in a less official character as the author focuses on the transnational interactions set up by China's Communist Youth League (CYL) in the 1950s. International youth organisations figure here as privileged channels for Sino-European cultural and political dialogue. By focusing on the CYL's engagement with the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), Graziani argues that international 'front' organisations provided the newly established PRC with precious opportunities to build contacts and develop exchanges with Western European youth, and to project its image as a peaceful country worldwide. The chapter reveals how relevant political figures, such as Hu Yaobang (who would become Party Secretary in the 1980s), were extremely active in establishing transnational networks at such an early stage. Moreover, it sheds light on individual experiences of lesser-known Western European participants in the WFDY.

Graziani and Mark directly engage with China's agency in building a new international role during the Cold War. While Graziani focuses on the work of the CCP's youth 'front' organization, Mark depicts in vivid colours China's 'everyday political propaganda'. The chapter analyses the cultural and political battle waged daily between the PRC and Britain on Hong Kong's soil, by examining two episodes in which leftist journalists were involved in riots and charged with sedition (respectively, in 1952 and 1967). During both episodes, the Hong Kong Governor refrained from suspending the main communist papers or closing down the Hong Kong branch of the New China News Agency (NCNA), which served as China's *de facto* embassy in the territory. The depiction of the propaganda work of leftist journalists in Hong Kong does not strike the reader for its being provocative and aggressive. Rather, the chapter illustrates it as 'routine, repetitive, and mundane, yet imbued with symbolic meaning'. The fact that London supported toning down the clamour aroused by China-instigated propaganda is sound evidence that the British were conscious of the non-written canvas which characterized Sino-British relations and that the primary aim of the Hong Kong and British governments was to contain, not 'roll back' the influence of the leftist press.

In sum, the chapters not only constitute a valuable contribution to the understanding of how non-governmental relations were deployed by the Chinese, but they also document a considerably proactive attitude adopted by the PRC. They bear witness to China's evident desire to reach out to non-Socialist – especially Capitalist Western – countries in the period between the end of the Korean War (1953) to the early 1960s (soon after the Sino-Soviet

ideological controversy consolidated). In this period, foreign policy choices were ingrained into New China's strategic will to develop an international role, whereas in the second half of the 1960s China's diplomacy was disrupted by the Cultural Revolution and to a greater degree relied on propaganda. The chapter by Cordoba and Liu documents how propaganda leaflets and other materials inundated activists and sympathizers in Switzerland and France, respectively, while Mark's chapter considers the same aspect in Hong Kong, during the most heated years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1968).

The chapters in this section show how Western Capitalist Communist sympathizers – be they political parties, friendship associations, front organizations or youth movements – were sensitive to New China's appeal and closely followed the political evolution in the PRC and in the international Communist movement. At the same time, they played a relevant role in integrating the European perception of Mao's China with the development of post-World War II European political and cultural history. The 1970s brought an easing of tensions, as well as the end of privileged 'people-to-people' diplomacy managed by pro-Communist activists.

3 Eastern Europe and China: National Interests and Ideology

The Communist victory in China in 1949 had a diametrically opposed effect on the Western and the Eastern bloc. Whereas it caused alarm in the former, it was welcomed as an opportunity by the latter. In these new circumstances, the Communist camp saw itself reinforced by the most populous and third largest country of the world. Stalin, who had previously only half-heartedly supported the CCP, thus rapidly agreed to a Sino-Soviet alliance treaty, which finally gave Mao the political, economic, technological, and military assistance he had sought from the Soviet Union for years. This cornerstone alliance of the Communist bloc then almost immediately showed its teeth during the Korean War, but rapidly deteriorated thereafter, and by the early 1960s the Soviet Union and China were not allies any longer but adversaries.

In light of first the Sovietization and then the Stalinization of Eastern Europe,²³ it would only seem logical that the evolution of the relationship between the Soviet 'satellites' and the PRC mirrored that of Moscow and Beijing. The chapters in this section show, however, that this was not necessarily

23 See, for instance, Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–56* (London: Penguin, 2013).

the case. Ultimately, the PRC's relations with Western Europe on the one hand, and Eastern Europe on the other, were not as diametrically opposed as one might expect. The broad patterns of the relations between most Eastern European countries and the PRC reflected the initial euphoria, temporary stabilisation, and decline of the Sino-Soviet relationship.²⁴ But at closer inspection, notably through the chapters of Jan Adamec, Margaret Gnoinska, and Chen Tao in this volume, it transpires that Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) did not just imitate or take orders from Moscow in their relations with the PRC, and that the Sino-Soviet split did have an important, but not an all-encompassing, impact. The emerging dispute between the USSR and the PRC actually increased the room for manoeuvre for Eastern European countries. Although the Chinese were not in a position to take on the Soviets in their European 'empire', they nevertheless offered an alternative ideological leadership and potential source of support. The Kremlin thus had to be more accommodating with its satellites to avoid frictions that would ultimately benefit Beijing or the West. The unfolding Sino-Soviet split could provide a platform for a break between the Soviet Union and its allies, such as in the case of Albania, which shifted its allegiance to China.²⁵ But more generally, in combination with de-Stalinization, it provided the Warsaw Pact countries with still limited but increased freedom of action, as is illustrated by the cases of Poland and, especially, Romania.²⁶

At least until the full escalation of the Sino-Soviet rivalry forced them to clearly take sides, the Communist countries could thus continue to pursue close relations with China. Thereby, and as the three chapters show, they were

24 On Sino-Eastern European relations, see Mercy Kuo, *Contending with Contradictions: China's Policy toward Soviet Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1953–1960* (Boulder CO, New York and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2001); Liu Xiaoyuan and Vojtech Mastny, eds., *China and Eastern Europe, 1960s–1980s*, Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung Nr. 72 (Zurich: Forschungsstelle für Sicherheitspolitik der ETH Zürich, 2004); Huang Lifu, Péter Vámos and Li Rui, eds., *New Archives, New Findings: The Relationships between China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* [in Chinese] (Beijing: Shehui kexue chubanshe, 2014).

25 Elidor Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao: Albania and the Socialist World* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), Ch. 6. On Sino-Albanian relations, see also Ylber Marku, 'China and Albania: The Cultural Revolution and Cold War Relations', *Cold War History* 17, no. 4 (2017): pp. 367–383.

26 Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962–1967* (Washington D.C. and Stanford CA: Woodrow Wilson Center and Stanford University Press, 2009), Ch. 2. On room for manoeuvre in the Warsaw Pact, see Dennis Deletant, "'Taunting the Bear": Romania and the Warsaw Pact, 1963–89', *Cold War History* 7, no. 4 (2007): pp. 495–507; and Laurien Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955–1969* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017).

from the beginning driven not only by the Cold War's bloc logic, but also by national, predominantly economic interests, and their respective ideological agendas. This helps to explain the differences in their relations with the PRC, whose leaders were also motivated by political and economic as well as ideological reasons. Beijing notably wanted to gain a foothold in the Soviet empire, and to benefit from Eastern European goods and expertise for its development. This led to temporarily strong relationships and extensive exchanges between Beijing and Prague, Warsaw, and East Berlin, which were not only affected by the Cold War, but also domestic politics and, on rare occasions, even outlived the Sino-Soviet split.

The three chapters in this section show that following in the footsteps of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the GDR rapidly established extensive political, economic, cultural, and even military relations with the PRC.²⁷ Whereas the advent of a Communist China initially signalled a dramatic economic loss for Western Europe, it provided Eastern Europe with a great opportunity to compensate for the loss of western markets caused by the Cold War division of Europe. The Communist Chinese, meanwhile, saw in Eastern Europe not only an alternative market for their raw materials and foodstuffs, but also a source of industrial products and technology. In light of these mutual and complementary interests, the Eastern European countries and the PRC rapidly evolved into important trade partners from the early 1950s onwards. Jan Adamec argues, however, that the economic relations with the PRC were all but a straightforward affair. Despite strong common interests, the Czechoslovak government found it difficult to negotiate a more extensive, stable, and predictable trade relationship with China. It was only in early 1959

27 On the Cold War relations between the PRC and Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the GDR, see Lenka Dřimalová, *Sino-Czechoslovak Cultural Relations after 1945* [in Czech] (Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Filozofická fakulta, Katedra asijských studií, Bakalářská diplomová práce, Olomouc, 2009); Daniela Kolenovská, *Between two Suns: Czechoslovakia in between Moscow and Beijing's Quest for Dominance in the International Communist Movement (1953–1962)* [in Czech], *Soudobé dějiny* 21 (2014); Margaret K. Gnoinska, 'Poland's Relations with China in Light of Sino-Soviet Interactions, 1949–1986', *Cold War International History Studies* [Lengzhan guojishi yanjiu] 12 (2012): pp. 33–89 [in Chinese]; Margaret K. Gnoinska, "'Socialist Friends Should Help Each Other in Crises': Sino-Polish Relations within the Cold War Dynamics, 1980–1987", *Cold War History* 17, no. 2 (2017): pp. 143–159; Claude Jousse-Keller, 'Quarante ans de relations culturelles sino-allemandes socialistes: RDC et RDA', in *Essays in Honour of Marian Galik*, edited by Floods Autumn (Berne: Peter Lang, 1998); Claudie Gardet, *Les relations de la République Populaire de Chine et de la République Démocratique Allemande: 1949–1989* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2000); Joachim Kruger, ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Beziehungen der DDR und der VR China* (Münster: IIT Verlag, 2002); Werner Meißner, *Die DDR und China, 1949 bis 1990. Politik-Wirtschaft-Kultur. Eine Quellensammlung* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995).

that the Czechoslovak negotiators succeeded to obtain from Beijing the commitment to enter into a long-term trade agreement, and after Prague had given in to Chinese demands on the export quota for Czechoslovak goods. In light of the seemingly unlimited economic potential of China, Prague was willing to compromise, and its optimism could not even be undermined by the turmoil caused by the onset of the Great Leap Forward, Chinese efforts to substitute Czechoslovak goods with their own, and rising transportation costs.

Transportation was indeed an issue, and Eastern-European countries, even landlocked Czechoslovakia, notably entered into shipping ventures with China.²⁸ Yet it was Poland which, as Margaret Gnoinska forcefully demonstrates in her chapter, emerged as a key player in this domain and succeeded in establishing a lasting joint shipping venture with the PRC: Chipolbrok. Set up and run from the beginning with seemingly little Soviet interference, this Sino-Polish undertaking was not only supposed to further Poland's economic agenda, but also played a key role in helping China to circumvent the western-led UN embargo following the outbreak of the Korean War. As in the case of Sino-Czechoslovak trade relations, this endeavour was not free from tensions. Warsaw had to make compromises in the operational running of Chipolbrok to satisfy Beijing's national pride and in response to the PRC's increasingly radical domestic and foreign policy agendas. But neither the spiralling turmoil in China itself, nor even the Sino-Soviet split, in which Warsaw officially sided with Moscow, could put an end to this shipping venture. This was not solely the result of mutual economic interests. Chipolbrok provided the Chinese with a foothold and a propaganda platform in the Soviet bloc, and the Polish with a window to peer into the Cultural Revolution. While this gave Warsaw a competitive edge over other Soviet bloc countries and thereby put it into a special position vis-à-vis the Kremlin, the government of Władysław Gomułka believed that both Poland and the Socialist camp needed China in the global struggle against the West.

In the case of Sino-East German relations, not only did ideology play a prominent role, but the impact of the Sino-Soviet split needs to be questioned too. This becomes evident from Chen Tao's chapter, which, by building on previous German research,²⁹ assesses the GDR's experiment with the CCP's Mass Line in the *Nationale Volksarmee* (NVA) (National People's Army) on the basis of

28 Lenka Krátká, *A History of the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping Company, 1948–1989: How a Small, Landlocked Country Ran Maritime Business during the Cold War* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2015), *passim*.

29 See, for instance, Klaus Storkmann, *Das chinesische Prinzip in der NVA: Vom Umgang der SED mit den Generalen und Offizieren in der frühen NVA – Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Verlag Dr Köster, 2001).

Chinese, in addition to German, sources. Shaken by Khrushchev's de-Stalinization agenda following the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED) (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) began to search for an alternative to the Soviet model. Thereby, and despite emerging tensions between Moscow and Beijing, East Berlin found ideological inspiration in China – the CCP's Mass Line, which was supposed to connect the party cadres to the masses. In the case of the NVA, this implied that officers had to serve temporarily as rank-and-file soldiers and ordinary workers in factories. Initiated in 1959, this experiment was extremely short-lived and had already been cancelled in 1961. In light of the timing, it would be tempting to explain this by the Sino-Soviet split. Chen argues, however, that this was not the sole explanatory variable, and that resistance from within the NVA and the associated costs were also important reasons for the cancellation of the Mass Line experiment.

China's confrontation with the Soviet Union had, as Odd Arne Westad has argued, a major impact on its foreign relations during the late Cold War.³⁰ This was also the case for the preceding decades, and even before the Sino-Soviet split China's foreign policy was heavily affected by its relations with the Soviet Union. The chapters in this section show, however, that prior, during, and after the Sino-Soviet split the relations between Eastern European countries and China were also heavily influenced by national interests, ideology, and domestic politics. Therefore, not only did the relationships between Soviet satellites and the PRC differ from one another, but none of them can be considered in any way to be a mirror image of that between Moscow and Beijing.

In sum, this book offers a fresh perspective on how Europe and China viewed and interacted with each other during the Cold War. The chapters will guide readers into a variegated array of national cases and personal experiences, which will contribute to problematize and diversify the perception of Cold War constraints on both sides of divided Europe and in China. Thereby, readers will not only have the opportunity to gain insights into Cold War China through the eyes of contemporaries, but also learn that the bloc logic and the Sino-Soviet split were influential, yet not all-determining factors in the relations between Europe and the PRC.

30 Odd Arne Westad, 'China and the End of the Cold War in Europe', *Cold War History* 17, no. 2 (2017): p. 112.

PART 1

*Unexplored Relations between Western
Europe and China*



Austria and China, 1949–1989: a Slow Rapprochement

Maximilian Graf and Wolfgang Mueller

In the Cold War era, Austria and China were unlikely partners. While the small Alpine republic recovered soon after the Second World War and did not experience a communist takeover or partition into a communist and a Western state, China underwent both. Still, even under these circumstances, and shaken by the political excesses of communist dictatorship, mainland China emerged as a pole of attraction for many other states. In the international arena, the People's Republic of China (PRC) soon overshadowed the much smaller pro-Western Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan. Their parallel existences and the PRC's claim that it represented all of China posed many problems for smaller European powers willing to establish bilateral relations.

This chapter is the first academic account of Austrian–Chinese relations during the Cold War, based on Austrian, German, Swiss, and US archival sources.¹ Without access to Chinese sources, however, some of its conclusions will remain preliminary. The narrative proceeds chronologically and takes into account the complicated issues of recognition, political, economic, and cultural relations, as well as mutual perceptions. By doing so, it will address questions such as what prevented and what facilitated recognition and what interests were pursued by both countries. The chapter will argue that Austria was ready to recognize the PRC early on; this was, however, prevented by various, changing, factors in the international arena. Once relations were established in 1971, bilateral contacts followed the pattern of Austria's relations with another communist power, the USSR, but lacking the historical background of Austrian–Soviet relations, they never became comparably close.

1 On Austrian–Chinese relations until 1980, but without archival sources for the period after 1950, see Gerd Kaminski and Else Unterrieder, *Von Österreichern und Chinesen* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1980). On Austrian–Chinese diplomatic relations, see Rudolf Agstner, '225 Jahre diplomatische und konsularische Präsenz', in *Österreich und China: 35 Jahre diplomatische Beziehungen* edited by Wolfgang Lanz and Hans-Dietmar Schweisgut (Beijing: Sanyuan Technology Development Co. Ltd., 2006), pp. 14–37; Andrea Nasi, 'Bilaterale Beziehungen zwischen der Republik Österreich und der Volksrepublik China: Eine interdisziplinäre Perspektive', (Dissertation, University of Vienna, 2008); Gerd Kaminski, *Von Österreichern und anderen Chinesen* (Vienna: Löcker, 2011).

1 Revolution and Non-recognition

After the Second World War, despite Allied occupation and control, Austria succeeded in re-establishing its own foreign policy relatively quickly.² Due to the second Allied Control Agreement of 1946, Austria was allowed to establish diplomatic relations with member states of the United Nations (UN) without restriction; the establishment of relations to other countries was subject to four-power control.³ Diplomatic relations with China, a UN member, were re-established in 1947. In October, the envoy Felix Stumvoll, who in the early twentieth century had served as an Austro-Hungarian diplomat in imperial China, was appointed as the Austrian representative in Nanjing. His Chinese counterpart arrived in Vienna by the end of the year.⁴ Stumvoll engaged in the building up of relations, the founding of Sino-Austrian Societies, and he took care of the rather small number of Austrians living in China.⁵ In the final stages of the Chinese Civil War,⁶ Stumvoll was pessimistic that the Guomindang (GMD) government after its flight to Taiwan would be able to recapture control of the mainland.⁷ In mid-1949, the GMD representative in Vienna was informed that 'certain adaptations with regard to the de facto situation' would be made by Austria.⁸ After the communists had taken control of Nanjing, the diplomatic corps was virtually confined to the city, and the harassment of Western, especially American, diplomats increased.⁹ As long as their countries

2 Klaus Fiesinger, *Ballhausplatzdiplomatie 1945-1949, Die Reetablierung der Nachbarschaftsbeziehungen und die Reorganisation des Auswärtigen Dienstes als Formen außenpolitischer Reemanzipation Österreichs* (Munich: Tuduv, 1993); Michael Gehler, *Österreichs Außenpolitik der Zweiten Republik. Von der alliierten Besatzung bis zum Europa des 21. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2005).

3 Gerald Stourzh and Wolfgang Mueller, *A Cold War over Austria: The Struggle for the State Treaty, Neutrality and the End of East-West Occupation, 1945-1955*. (Lanham: Lexington, 2018), pp. 34-35.

4 Cf. Agstner, '225 Jahre diplomatische und konsularische Präsenz', p. 32.

5 For details, see Kaminski and Unterrieder, *Von Österreichern und Chinesen*, pp. 849-875.

6 Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950* (Stanford: University Press, 2003).

7 Stumvoll to Gruber, Nanjing, 5 November 1948, Zl. 26/Pol/48, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Archiv der Republik (AdR), Bundeskanzleramt/Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (BKA/AA), Sektion II-Pol (II-Pol) 1948, China 3, Gr.Zl. 114.365, GZ. 119.161-Pol/1948.

8 MemCon Heinrich Wildner – Chinese Envoy, Vienna, May 1949, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1949, China 3, Gr.Zl. 83.253-pol/49, GZ. 83.579-Pol/49.

9 Stumvoll to Gruber, Nanjing, 24 June 1949, Zl. 17/Pol/49, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1949, China 3, Gr.Zl. 80.109-pol/49, GZ. 86.842-Pol/49; Stumvoll to Gruber, Nanjing, 12 August 1949, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1949, China 3, Gr.Zl. 80.109-pol/49, GZ. 87.893-Pol/49.

had not recognized the new regime established as the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949, they had little reason to hope for improvement.

When several countries such as Great Britain and neutral Switzerland recognized the PRC soon thereafter, the situation for those who had not become even worse. With an eye on the need for ongoing consular representation of Austrians in China, Stumvoll, therefore, recommended recognizing the PRC.¹⁰ The Austrian government had no doubt that the communists were effectively in control of large parts of the mainland. Additionally, economic factors spoke for the establishment of relations with the PRC. Still, Austrian diplomats feared that the United States, Austria's main protector, might veto this.¹¹ Therefore, Foreign Minister Karl Gruber decided by the end of January 1950 not to recognize the PRC until all four occupation powers had done so.¹²

On 20 January 1950, Austria closed its Legation in Nanjing – officially due to financial considerations, as the new communist regime was informed.¹³ In response, the Republic of China shut down its Legation in Vienna in June 1950. Relations between Austria and the old Chinese regime were put on ice, but actually were never officially interrupted.¹⁴

In mid-1950, Austrian diplomats opined that 'at the moment the advance of communism into Southeast Asia has come to a standstill'.¹⁵ Within days, however, the North Korean attack on South Korea proved this to be wrong and confirmed the Austrian mission's earlier assessment that 'any consolidation of the conditions in China will bring about an activation of China's activities in South East Asia and a threat to the status quo in these countries'.¹⁶ Indeed, the communist assault, which was supported by the PRC, not only brought global tensions to a new high, but also triggered repercussions in Europe. Western

¹⁰ Stumvoll to Gruber, Shanghai, 18 January 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1950, China 3, Gr.Zl. 120.203-pol/50, GZ. 127.209-Pol/50; Stumvoll to Gruber, Shanghai, 30 January 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1950, China 3, Gr.Zl. 120.053-pol/50, GZ. 125.903-Pol/50.

¹¹ Memorandum. Anerkennung des kommunistischen China, Vienna, January 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1950, China 3, Gr.Zl. 120.203-pol/50, GZ. 120.773-pol/50.

¹² Handwritten directive by Gruber. Anerkennung Sowjet-chinas, Vienna, 31 January 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1950, China 3, Gr.Zl. 120.203-pol/50, GZ. 120.604-Pol/50.

¹³ Stumvoll to the Foreign Affairs Bureau under the Military Control Commission, Shanghai, 18 January 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1950, China 3, Gr.Zl. 120.203-pol/50, GZ. 127.209-Pol/50.

¹⁴ Memorandum, Vienna, 8 August 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1950, China 49, GZ. 126.078-Pol/50.

¹⁵ Die Entwicklung in Asien, Vienna, 21 June 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1950, China 3, Gr.Zl. 120.053-pol/50, GZ. 124.946-Pol/50.

¹⁶ Chinesische Ostasienpolitik, Vienna, 16 December 1948, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1948, China 3, Gr.Zl. 114.365, GZ. 119.160-Pol/48.

European integration and West Germany's rearmament were accelerated. In Austria, the Communist Party tried to use the economic setback caused by the Korean War to destabilize the government with a general strike attempt and unrest. Another consequence of the Korean War was that Austria's recognition of the PRC, which supported North Korea's aggression, became inopportune.¹⁷

This situation did not change until the signing of the Austrian State Treaty in May 1955. In the spring, West Germany's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had convinced the Kremlin that ending the four-power occupation of Austria and neutralizing this country was strategically more advantageous to the Soviet side than the status quo.¹⁸ Simultaneously, Austria's pro-Soviet ambassador to Moscow, Norbert Bischoff, began to press for recognition of the PRC. In his view, neutral Austria should immediately establish diplomatic relations with Beijing since no other European neutral had abstained from doing so.¹⁹ What he did not mention was that Sweden, Switzerland, and some NATO member states had recognized the PRC before its military intervention in Korea. Moreover, other diplomats argued that Austria's recognition of the PRC might cause the Republic of China, which still controlled the Chinese seat in the UN Security Council, to veto Austria's application for UN membership.²⁰ Last but not least, British diplomats had confided to the Austrians that negotiations with the PRC would cause severe dissatisfaction in the United States.²¹ When Bischoff informed the PRC Embassy in Moscow about the reasons for Austria's reluctance, he found the PRC diplomats to be understanding of this position. Nevertheless, he kept pushing for diplomatic recognition.²²

To complicate the situation even further, the Republic of China had also started to press for renewal of diplomatic relations. While Austria opposed this idea, no open refusal of Taiwan's request seemed advisable, because of the ROC's position in the UN Security Council. Had Austria openly rejected the ROC's overtures, this may well have resulted in the ROC blocking Austria's UN

17 Memorandum in longhand, Vienna, 9 September 1952, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1952, China 2, GZ. 155.577-pol/50.

18 Otherwise, NATO might have continued or even increased its use of western Austria. Stourzh and Mueller, *A Cold War over Austria*, pp. 313–314.

19 Bischoff to Foreign Minister Leopold Figl, Moscow, 18 April 1955, Zl. 31/P, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1955, China 2, GZ. 321.594-pol/54.

20 Memorandum, Frage der Aufnahme diplomat. Beziehungen, Vienna, 2 May 1955, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1955, China 2, GZ. 332.035-Int/55.

21 Memorandum, Peking-Reise Botschafter Bischoffs, Vienna, 3. September 1955, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1955, China 2, Gr.Zl. 332.035-pol/55, GZ. 324.583-pol/55.

22 Bischoff to Figl, Moscow, 3 July 1955, Zl. 31/P/55, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1955, China 2, Gr.Zl. 332.035-Int/55, GZ. 323.663-Pol/55.

accession. Instead, Austrian diplomats were instructed to explain their country's reluctance by pointing to personal and financial difficulties.²³ Immediately after Austria's accession to the UN on 15 December 1955, Bischoff once again pressed for proceeding with recognition.²⁴ Nonetheless, the Foreign Office remained reluctant. Under the given circumstances, even a trade agreement seemed impossible. Moreover, the Federal Government disliked the idea of entrusting its 'red ambassador' in Moscow with relations to the PRC, because this was likely to create the image of Soviet pressure in this regard.²⁵

The Austrian position was not altered by the PRC's attitude, which welcomed Austria's newly declared neutrality. At the Afro-Asian Bandung Conference in April 1955, the PRC had strongly advocated non-alignment with any of the superpowers,²⁶ and in the second session of the PRC Political Consultative Assembly on 30 January 1956, Zhou Enlai declared: 'The neutral situation of Finland, Sweden and Switzerland had already, due to their neutrality, brought benefit to their people, more and more such benefit had attracted other capitalist countries. Austria's decision to maintain permanent neutrality has paved the way for Austria's peaceful development. We respect Austria's neutral status and would like to see the establishment of relations of peaceful cooperation between China and Austria.'²⁷ These words, however, could not overcome the obstacles against Austria's recognition of the PRC.

The Soviet crackdown on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 marked a first test for Austria's neutrality. During the uprising, Soviet propaganda and diplomats had attacked Austria as a scapegoat for allegedly supporting the uprising and not observing neutrality.²⁸ When the Kremlin sent Politburo member Anastas Mikoyan to Vienna in April 1957 to mend fences, Bischoff insinuated that the Soviets would be very interested in the Austrian position towards the

23 Austrian Embassy in Paris to the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), 29 June 1955, ZL 567-Res/55, MFA to Ambassador, Vienna, 28. July 1955, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1955, China 2, Gr.Zl. 332.035-pol/55, GZ. 324.121-pol/55.

24 Bischoff to Figl, Moscow, 17 December, 1955, ZL 86-Pol/55, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1955, China 2, Gr.Zl. 332.035-pol/55, GZ. 326.943-pol/55.

25 Zur Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen, Vienna, 29 December 1955, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1955, China 2, Gr.Zl. 332.035-pol/55, GZ. 326.943-pol/55. Einsichtsbeurteilung, 5 January 1956, *ibid.* MFA to Bischoff, 27 January 1956, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1956, China 2, Gr.Zl. 511.204-pol/56, GZ. 511.433-Pol/56.

26 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 101.

27 For a first translation from *The Shanghai Daily News*, 31 January 1956, see ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1956, China 2, Gr.Zl. 511.204-pol/56, GZ. 512.376-pol/56.

28 Wolfgang Mueller, *A Good Example of Peaceful Coexistence? The Soviet Union, Austria, and Neutrality, 1955–1991* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), pp. 89–94.

P RC.²⁹ Similar expectations were communicated later on the eve of Chancellor Julius Raab's trip to Moscow in 1958.³⁰ These speculations were consistent with the Soviet demand that neutral states had to maintain friendly relations with all countries.³¹ Vienna decided that in the long run non-recognition of the P RC was not justified; however, the time to take any action in this field had not yet come. Another reason for delaying the P RC issue was the Austrian aim of becoming host to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA): without US and ROC support, this would be impossible. Moreover, US diplomacy left no doubt that any Austrian step toward recognizing the P RC would strain US–Austrian relations, and Austria was not, according to Foreign Ministry documents, 'willing to endanger relations with the United States unnecessarily, since their expectant advocacy for Austria in case of a crisis would be vitally important'.³² On his trip to Washington D.C., in 1958, Raab was informed by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles that the United States expected Austria not to establish official contacts to Beijing prematurely. At the same time, P RC representatives told Austrian visitors that an improvement of economic contacts was possible only after establishing political relations.³³ Vienna's wait-and-see attitude did not preclude unofficial contacts³⁴ taking place between the Austrian Member of Parliament Lujo Tončić-Sorinj and Zhou Enlai in Beijing in 1957.³⁵ Unfortunately no detailed report of their conversations has yet been discovered. While this encounter was not intended to pave the way for diplomatic relations, it caused international rumours to this effect.³⁶

Similarly, the line with regard to Taiwan was maintained. Although the founding of the IAEA with its headquarters in Vienna brought a ROC representative

29 Problem der Anerkennung der Volksrepublik China, Vienna, 17 April 1957, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1957, China 2, Gr.Zl. 215.674-pol/57, GZ. 218.875-Pol/57.

30 Vorbereitung des Besuches des Herrn Bundeskanzlers, Vienna, 20 June 1958, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1958, Sowjetunion 2, Gr.Zl. 544.163-pol/58, GZ. 550.368-pol/58.

31 Mueller, *A Good Example*, pp. 60–62.

32 Problem der Anerkennung der Volksrepublik China, Vienna, 17 April 1957. On the founding of the IAEA, see Elisabeth Röhrlich, 'Die Gründung der *International Atomic Energy Agency* (IAEA) in Wien: Österreich, die atomare Herausforderung und der Kalte Krieg', in *Wissenschaft, Technologie und industrielle Entwicklung in Zentraleuropa im Kalten Krieg*, edited by Wolfgang L. Reiter, Juliane Mikoletzky, Herbert Matis, and Mitchell G. Ash (Vienna: Lit, 2017), pp. 339–368.

33 Report by West German Ambassador Mueller-Graaf, Vienna, 23 June 1958. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA/AA), Berlin, B 23, Bd. 107.

34 Information für den Herrn Bundesminister, Vienna, 31 May 1957, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1957, China 2, Gr.Zl. 215.674-pol/57, GZ. 220.651-Pol/57.

35 Memorandum Tončić-Sorinj, Vienna, 20 September 1957, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1957, China 2, Gr.Zl. 219.827-pol/57, GZ. 224.394-Pol/57.

36 Report by West German Consulate general, Hong Kong, 2 July 1957, PA/AA, B 23, Bd. 63.

back to town,³⁷ relations with the Republic of China were not revived. In the General Assembly of the UN, Austria (until 1970) abstained from voting on China, causing disappointment in both the United States and the ROC.³⁸ Despite the growing Austrian tendency towards recognizing the PRC for economic reasons, the question remained a political one, and in the end, solidarity with the United States prevailed³⁹ – not least because of massive US assistance after the Second World War, as Bruno Kreisky, then Austrian foreign minister, explained to the Austrian parliament on 5 December 1961.⁴⁰ Even economic arguments were not sufficient to cause any significant change in the Austrian position. As in the case of East Germany, an agreement at the level of the Chambers of Commerce seemed sufficient.⁴¹

2 Communists, Businessmen, and Journalists: Unofficial Relations in Times of Non-recognition

Austrian economic representatives, however, were preceded by another group of travellers. As a result of 'communist internationalism', several Austrian communists had been involved in the Chinese Civil War.⁴² The physician and journalist Fritz Jensen was perhaps the most knowledgeable German-speaking expert on China in the early post-revolutionary period. He served as correspondent for the Austrian and East German communist dailies *Volksstimme* and *Neues Deutschland*. When he died in a plane crash in April 1955, he was buried in the Beijing 'Heroes' Cemetery.⁴³ The economic section of the Austrian

37 Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Nationalchina und Österreich, Vienna, 9 September 1958, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1958, China 2, Gr.Zl. 552.387-pol/58, GZ. 553.882-Pol/58.

38 Platzter to Figl, Washington, 17 October 1958, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1958, China 2, Gr.Zl. 553.958-pol/58, GZ. 555.748-Pol/58.

39 Council of Ministers, Verhandlungsschrift 22, 24 October 1961, ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Minister-ratsprotokolle (MRP).

40 Nationalrat IX. GP. 84. Sitzung, 5 December 1961, pp. 3598–3599.

41 Vortrag an den Ministerrat. Das österreichische Verhältnis zur Volksrepublik China, Vienna, 18 April 1961, ÖStA, AdR, Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (BMAA), II-Pol 1961, Rotchina 2, Gr.Zl. 18.045-6/61, GZ. 22.096-6(Pol)/61. On East Germany, see Maximilian Graf, *Österreich und die DDR 1949–1990. Politik und Wirtschaft im Schatten der deutschen Teilung* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016), pp. 234–278.

42 Thomas Kampen, 'Deutsche und österreichische Kommunisten im revolutionären China', in *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung* (1997), pp. 88–104; Gerd Kaminski, *Jakob Rosenfeld – Ich kannte sie alle. Tagebücher aus China 1941–1949* (Vienna: Löcker, 2011).

43 Austrian Embassy to MFA, Beijing, 12 June 1985, ÖStA AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1985, GZ. 33.19.01/1-II.3/85. On Jensen, see Eva Barilich, *Fritz Jensen. Arzt an vielen Fronten* (Vienna: Globus, 1991).

Communist Party (KPÖ) served as an intermediary between the PRC and Austria,⁴⁴ and both communist parties maintained cultural ties between the two countries. In 1952, Chinese–Austrian cultural weeks took place in Vienna. Such events attracted people beyond the limited scope of Austrian communists. Those interactions prevailed at least until the communist World Youth Festival in Vienna in 1959. Top-level party relations led to (not always reciprocal) delegations to party congresses.⁴⁵

With the Sino–Soviet conflict,⁴⁶ Austrian–Chinese communist relations deteriorated. The KPÖ leadership – despite its sympathies for the Chinese opposition to Khrushchev – sided with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU); only small factions and short-lived political movements followed the PRC.⁴⁷ From the mid-1960s to 1968, the KPÖ pursued a reform-communist path. However, reform-minded and dogmatic functionaries regularly clashed over the future course. In 1968, a severe party crisis surfaced and subsequently the pro-Soviet Muscovites crowded out the reformers and closely aligned with the East German communists.⁴⁸ Ironically, the group of expelled communists, who, over a decade, had transformed themselves from staunch Stalinists into Eurocommunists *avant la lettre*, like so many other representatives of the ‘new left’, almost unconditionally supported Mao’s so-called Cultural Revolution.⁴⁹ The incipient revolutions of 1989 brought the KPÖ back into the ideological struggles of the 1960s. Against this backdrop, the KPÖ, unlike the East German communists, condemned the massacre at Tiananmen Square.⁵⁰ However, over time, the dissolution of the Soviet Union changed the KPÖ’s attitude towards

44 Fűrberg (KPÖ) to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Vienna, 18 January 1954, Zentrales Parteiarchiv der KPÖ, Vienna, Auslandskorrespondenz 1954.

45 Kaminski/Unterrieder, *Von Österreichern und Chinesen*, pp. 889–898.

46 Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split. Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: University Press, 2008).

47 Leopold Spira, *Ein gescheiterter Versuch. Der Austro-Eurokommunismus* (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1979), pp. 45–48.

48 Maximilian Graf, ‘The Rise and Fall of “Austro-Eurocommunism”. On the “Crisis” within the KPÖ and the Significance of East German Influence in the 1960s’, *Journal of European Integration History* 20, no. 2 (2014), pp. 203–218.

49 This becomes visible in their journal *Wiener Tagebuch*. Cf. Maximilian Graf and Sarah Knoll, eds., *Franz Marek. Beruf und Berufung Kommunist. Lebenserinnerungen und Schlüsseltexte* (Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2017), pp. 87–91.

50 Maximilian Graf, ‘Die KPÖ und Europa. Internationale Stellung und Europapolitik einer Kleinpartei (1945–heute)’, in *Kommunismus und Europa. Europapolitik und -vorstellungen der europäischen kommunistischen Parteien 1945–1989* edited by Francesco Di Palma and Wolfgang Mueller (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016), pp. 240–260, here pp. 250–251.

the PRC. At least some of today's members express their satisfaction that the Chinese leadership did not take 'Gorbachev's counterrevolutionary path'.⁵¹

Economic relations between Austria and the PRC harked back to the early 1950s. In addition to communist engagement, the Ost-West-Büro trade agency of the bourgeois pro-Soviet economist Josef Dobretsberger engaged in promoting trade between Austria and the PRC. These contacts were accompanied by the Federation of Austrian Industrialists; the first Austrian trade delegation to the PRC in 1956 was received by Zhou Enlai and brought home orders totalling some 600 million ATS (25 million USD). This resulted in a short-term increase in trade between Austria and the PRC. However, without recognition and – most probably – due to the PRC's domestic problems, bilateral trade soon declined again.⁵² Moreover, as a small country with limited economic possibilities Austria lacked the means of creating sustainable economic relations with the turbulent Chinese market.

By the end of the 1950s, the Austrian Chamber of Commerce had also started to engage in trade relations with the PRC.⁵³ In principle, the Austrian Foreign Ministry did not oppose the founding of a Chamber representation in Beijing, but it made it clear that a future PRC Trade Mission in Vienna would not be granted diplomatic privileges such as the right to fly the flag of the PRC, police protection for its representation, the right to use telegraphic codes and so on.⁵⁴ Judging from Austrian sources, it seems that the PRC was not interested in concluding an agreement between the Chambers in the early 1960s. In the end, Austria decided to entrust the Consulate General in Hong Kong with managing trade between Austria and the PRC.⁵⁵ The Austrian trade delegate in the British crown colony, Walter Svoboda, regularly reported that the PRC had been courting him and argued for facilitating trade with the PRC. In his view, the Austrian reluctance was due to the Sino–Soviet split and pressure from the USSR and

51 Alexander Dinböck, "90 Jahre Kommunistische Partei Chinas. Österreicher an der Seite der chinesischen Kommunisten," in *Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft. Mitteilungen* 18 (2011) 4, pp. 22–23, here pp. 22.

52 Kaminski and Unterrieder, *Von Österreichern und Chinesen*, pp. 876–884. Swiss diplomacy observed the Austrian economic dealings with the PRC and saw a direct link between the question of recognition and the trade volume. Memorandum. Austrian trade with both Chinas and Koreas, 17 August 1971, Bundesarchiv, Berne, E 2001E-01, 1988/16, BD: 604.

53 Errichtung einer Aussenhandelsstelle in Peking, Vienna, 13 January 1959, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1959, Rotchina 2, GZ. 236.267-POL/59.

54 Errichtung einer Aussenhandelsstelle in Peking, Vienna, 29 April 1959, ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol 1959, Rotchina 2, Gr.Zl. 236.267-POL/59, GZ. 241.209-Pol/59.

55 Memorandum, Volksrepublik China; Kontakte des österreichischen Handelsdelegierten in Hongkong mit den "Chinese Resources", Vienna, 11 July 1961, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1961, Rotchina 2, GZ. 26.923-6/61.

its allies.⁵⁶ He also criticized the internal competition among various Austrian economic actors in the PRC.⁵⁷ Starting from 1964 (after the French recognition of the PRC), Consul General Rudolf Majlat paid several visits to the PRC and pleaded for quick recognition. The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution put an end to such initiatives.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the year 1964 brought substantial progress in the field of bilateral trade. Already in the spring, it turned out that the PRC no longer opposed an agreement⁵⁹ between the Austrian Chamber of Commerce and the PRC's Council for Promotion of International Trade, which was signed in December 1964. Both sides agreed to establish trade representations. While the PRC pressed for an exchange of letters guaranteeing certain privileges,⁶⁰ the Austrian side cut many references to state representation out of the PRC draft, such as the competency of issuing visas.⁶¹ Before the PRC representation was established, Taiwan reacted quickly by establishing the Trade Representative's Office of the Central Trust of China.⁶² It was not allowed to use the name 'Republic of China', and the Austrian government did not expect any repercussions to trade between Austria and the PRC.⁶³

The PRC representation in Vienna was opened in May 1965, causing Western unease⁶⁴ – not least because of the office's extensive activities and personnel

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- 56 Svoboda to MA, Hong Kong, 15 October 1963, Zl. 52-Pol/63, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1963, Rotchina 2, Gr.Zl. 211.311-6/63, GZ. 36.690-6/63.
 - 57 Svoboda to Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky, Hong Kong, 25 November 1964, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1964, VR China 2, GZ. 82.108-6/64.
 - 58 Kaminski and Unterrieder, *Von Österreichern und Chinesen*, p. 943.
 - 59 Information für den Herrn Bundesminister, Vienna, 11 May 1964, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1964, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 70.087-6/64, GZ. 72.996-6/64.
 - 60 Reise einer Delegation der Bundeskammer der gewerbl. Wirtschaft in die VR China, Vienna, 8 October 1964, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1964, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 70.087-6/64, GZ. 78.845-6/64.
 - 61 Austausch von Handelsmissionen, Vienna, 4 August 1965, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1965, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 135.677-6/65, GZ. 140.452-6/65; Austausch von Handelsmissionen, Vienna, 15 September 1965, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1965, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 135.677-6/65, GZ. 142.252-6/65; Reziprozitätsabkommen, Vienna, 9. February 1966, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1966, VR China 2, GZ. 31.766-6/66.
 - 62 Handelsvertrag mit der Republik China (Formosa), Vienna, 5 February 1965, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1965, Nat. China 2, Gr.Zl. 130.376-II/65, GZ. 131.652-II/65.
 - 63 Republik China – Errichtung einer Handelsvertretung, Vienna, 24 February 1965, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1965, Nat. China 2, Gr.Zl. 130.376-6/65, GZ. 132.629-6/65.
 - 64 "Die Welt" über die Handelsmissionen der VR China und der Republik China in Österreich, Vienna, 14 July 1965, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1965, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 135.677-6/65, GZ. 139.507-6/65.

capacities.⁶⁵ On the occasion of the Vienna fair, the US Embassy rightly complained about the PRC's pavilion (decorated with a giant portrait of Mao) distributing anti-American propaganda material. Austrian authorities stopped this activity.⁶⁶ Austrian police reports about the PRC trade office testify to a rather isolated group of Chinese functionaries, who only slowly came to life in Austria. Not even in Vienna could they escape the dictates of the Cultural Revolution, as their initiative for joining Austrian farmers in the harvest campaign showed. When their Austrian janitor proved unable to name appropriate farmers for this effort, 'three male and two female' members of the PRC Council's mission in Austria, as the Austrian police report noted, volunteered to clean the staircase of their apartment building in the 'morning hours of 27 September 1966'.⁶⁷

When the Austrian Chamber opened its representation in Beijing in early 1966, it regularly showed anticipatory obedience towards the PRC by adopting, at least in oral statements, a 'one-China policy'.⁶⁸ This led not only to a serious reprimand from Vienna, but also to another round of reassessing Austria's policy toward China. Since the PRC was also acting due to economic motivations, Austrian diplomats rejected any discrimination against Taiwan, which in contrast to the unstable and 'menacing' PRC (even compared to Hitler's Germany by one Austrian diplomat) was perceived as being the more stable partner. In the end, the Austrian government decided to continue its previous policy towards both states.⁶⁹ The Chamber agreement and the establishment of mutual representations had a stimulating effect on bilateral economic exchange, even though the Austrian trade deficit was not immediately eliminated. Already in December 1965, the largest enterprise of Austria's nationalized industries, the VÖEST (Vereinigte Österreichische Eisen- und Stahlwerke), received a large-scale order for the construction of a steel work amounting to

65 "Chinesische Bemühungen", Artikel in der "Süddeutsche Zeitung" v. 10. 7. 65, Vienna, 19 July 1965, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1965, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 135.677-6/65, GZ. 139.719-6/65.

66 Politische Aktivität der Volksrepublik China in Österreich; Vorsprache des Geschäftsträgers der USA, Vienna, 14. September 1965, *ibid.*, II-Pol 1965, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 135.677-II/65, GZ. 142.866-6/65.

67 Handelsvertretung der VR China in Österreich, Erhebungen und Beobachtungen, Vienna, 8. Oktober 1966, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1965, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 135.677-6/65, GZ. 137.969-6(Pol)/65.

68 Besprechung mit Angehörigen der Handelsvertretung der VR China in Wien, 17 February 1966, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1966, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 31.766-6/66, GZ. 31.685-6(Pol)/66.

69 Republik China; Intensivierung der Handelsbeziehungen mit Österreich, Vienna, 23 September 1966, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1966, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 31.766-6/66, GZ. 44.672-6/66.

more than 350 million ATS (14.5 million USD).⁷⁰ When there were no large-scale orders (such as the vÖEST deal of 1965/67), Austrian exports in the years 1966–71 ranged from 106 to 177 ATS (4.4–7.3 million USD); imports from 218 to 321 million ATS (9–13.3 million USD), amounting to about 0.2 per cent of Austrian exports and 0.3 per cent of Austrian imports.⁷¹

During the Cultural Revolution, Austrian construction workers deployed in the PRC were accused of espionage.⁷² Even though the Chamber feared possible repercussions against its representation,⁷³ the vÖEST opted not to make the dangers Austrian workers had to face in the PRC public.⁷⁴ However, vÖEST workers were not the only Austrians exploring the PRC of the 1960s. In the tradition of prominent ‘fellow traveller’ Edgar Snow in the 1930s, the editor of the popular Austrian daily *Kurier*, Hugo Portisch, travelled to China on the eve of the Cultural Revolution in 1964. During his stay, he was even received by the PRC’s foreign minister, Marshal Chen Yi, who, among other things, informed him that the PRC would not feel threatened even in the case of a US intervention in North Vietnam. This was the PRC’s first response to the US bombings of North Vietnam. Being the only Western journalist in the PRC, Portisch became the ‘channel’ for this message.⁷⁵ After his return, he published widely about his impressions, and these helped to shape Western perceptions of the PRC.⁷⁶ His breaking news from the PRC resulted in two cover stories for the renowned *Saturday Review* and in *The New York Times* headline: ‘China does not want to go to war’.⁷⁷ This gave him a certain international prominence and – according to his memoirs – even attracted the interest of the U.S. Department of State.⁷⁸

These experiences, however, did not prevent the PRC from systematically suppressing the freedom of the media and from strictly regulating and

70 Verhandlungen einer Delegation der BkdgW mit dem Chin. Rat zur Förderung des internat. Handels in Peking, Vienna, 29 September 1966, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1966, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 31.766-6/66, GZ. 45.346-6(Pol)/66.

71 For the figures in the period of non-recognition, see Nasi, ‘Bilaterale Beziehungen,’ 40–41.

72 Ambassador Luegmayer to MFA, Stockholm, 7 December 1967, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1966, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 14.491-6/67, GZ. 35.343-6/67.

73 Chamber of Commerce to MFA, Vienna, 19 January, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1967, VR China 2, GZ. 14.491-6/67.

74 Telex by vÖEST, 8 November 1967, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1967, China 49, GZ. 34.421-6/67.

75 Hugo Portisch, *Aufregend war es immer* (Salzburg: Ecwin, 2015), pp. 163–185.

76 Hugo Portisch, *So sah ich China. Ein Tatsachen- und Erlebnisbericht aus dem Reich Mao Tse-tungs* (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 1965). In English, *Eyewitness in China* (London: Bodley Head, 1966) and *Red China today* (New York: Quadrangle, 1966).

77 Kaminski and Unterrieder, *Von Österreichern und Chinesen*, pp. 911–912.

78 Portisch, *Aufregend war es immer*, pp. 182–183.

occasionally banning visits by foreign, and also Austrian, correspondents.⁷⁹ Immediately after diplomatic recognition, several Austrian journalists were denied visas. Remonstrations by Austrian diplomats brought no results. In their view, the concept of ‘freedom of press’ was ‘alien’ or ‘abstract’ to the PRC’s diplomats, whereas from the Chinese perspective the denial of visa was ‘self-inflicted’ by the journalists themselves.⁸⁰

3 Recognition

From 1949 on, various obstacles had emerged that prevented Austria from recognizing the PRC. When recognition was finally extended, this was mainly due to the absence of such factors and a general trend in international politics. Even though the French recognition of the PRC in 1964 paved the way for an intensification and formalization of economic relations, the Austrian government decided that it had no reason to change its foreign policy with regard to China.⁸¹ When Canada started to negotiate with the PRC in 1970, this sparked another re-evaluation of the Austrian position.⁸² Legal and practical considerations spoke in favour of recognition. The PRC was in effective control of mainland China, and Austria as a neutral, the Ministry argued, was interested in ‘maintaining international relations as universally as possible’. On the practical side, the emergence of the PRC – as a ‘great power’, as Austrian diplomats saw it – on the global stage, particularly in Asia and Africa, and as a huge market also spoke in favour of recognition. Last but not least, it was feared that Austria might become isolated if it were denied recognition. Among its counter-arguments, the Foreign Ministry mentioned the position of the United States, and to a lesser degree the USSR, Taiwan, and about 20 million Chinese expatriates; public opinion which could ‘erroneously perceive diplomatic recognition for moral approval’ of the PRC; and the possible repercussions for

79 Memorandum, Visaverweigerung der VR China für österreichische Journalisten, Vienna, 8 November 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 120.873-II/71.

80 MemCon Kirchschräger-Wang Yueh-yi, Vienna, 8 November 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 122.474-II/71. One of the Austrian journalists who were allowed to visit the PRC was Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Zuhause ist überall. Erinnerungen* (Vienna: Zsolnay, 2013), pp. 197–210.

81 Council of Ministers, Verhandlungsschrift 30, 21 January 1965, ÖStA, AdR, BKA, MRP; Runderlaß (Frage der Anerkennung Pekings; Sprachregelung), Vienna, 2 March 1964, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1964, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 65.775-6/64, GZ. 67.805-6(Pol)/64.

82 Information für den Herrn Bundesminister, Vienna, 4 June 1970, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1970, VR China 2, GZ. 84.954-6/70.

the Austrian position regarding recognition of the communist part of other countries such as Germany, Korea and Vietnam. It was noted, however, that no Western power that had recognized the PRC had done the same regarding the GDR.⁸³

Canadian recognition in 1971, and the constant pressure of Austrian economic circles, led to a discussion of Austria's China policy in the Austrian Parliament. The main objective was to find a formula for recognizing the PRC, without recognizing the PRC's sovereignty over Taiwan.⁸⁴ The Foreign Policy Committee of the Austrian Parliament agreed with moving forward in establishing relations with the PRC on 19 February 1971, and the plenary session of the parliament followed on 3 March without a dissenting vote. Thereafter, the Council of Ministers entrusted the Austrian Embassy in Bucharest with informing the PRC about Austria's willingness to recognize the PRC and to start negotiations regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations.⁸⁵ On 5 April, the PRC's diplomats informed Austria of their willingness to negotiate and their propositions: first, Austria had to recognize the PRC as the 'sole legal government, representing the entire Chinese people'; second, Austria 'must sever the relations with' Taiwan; third, it 'must support the legitimate right and positions' of the PRC in the United Nations; and fourth, show 'no support for' Taiwan.⁸⁶ On 26 April, Austria informed the PRC's diplomats in Bucharest of the Austrian answer to the PRC's propositions.

First, on the one hand, '[...] Austria has never entertained diplomatic relations with the Government in Formosa. [...] On the other hand Austria does not see her way to recognize the Government of the [PRC] as the Government

83 China-Frage; Behandlung im Außenpolitischen Ausschuß; Arbeitsunterlage, Vienna, 30 January 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 106.432-6(Pol)/71. On Austrian–East German relations in the period of non-recognition, see Maximilian Graf, 'Austria and the German Democratic Republic 1949–1972. Diplomatic and Political Contacts in the period of Non-recognition', in *From the Austrian Empire to Communist East Central Europe*, edited by Arnold Suppan and Maximilian Graf (Vienna: Lit, 2010), pp. 151–177. On Austria and Vietnam, see Wolfgang Mueller and Maximilian Graf, 'An Austrian mediation in Vietnam? The superpowers, neutrality, and Kurt Waldheim's good offices' in *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War. Between or within the blocs?*, edited by Sandra Bott, Jussi Hanhimäki, Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, and Marco Wyss (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 127–143.

84 Runderlass, gez. Wodak, Vienna, 23 October 1970, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1970, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 94.036-6/70, GZ. 94.367-6(Pol)/70.

85 Council of Ministers, Verhandlungsschrift 44, 9 March 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BKA, MRP; Runderlass, gez. Magrutsch, Vienna, 15 March 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, GZ. 108.402-6(Pol)/71.

86 Ambassador Tschöp to MFA, Bucharest, 5 April 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 110.184-6(Pol)/71.

representing the entire Chinese people. It is well known that all over the world and particularly in South-East Asia, millions of Chinese hold the citizenship of their country of residence. It would be inappropriate for Austria to interfere in the internal affairs of these countries by expressing an opinion about the allegiance of their citizens'. Second, 'According to established international practice, the establishment of diplomatic relations does not require the recognition by the parties concerned of each other's international boundaries. Austria on her part desires no recognition of her frontiers by the [PRC]. By the same token, she sees herself in no position to either recognize or challenge the sovereignty of the [PRC] over Formosa. [...] [A] severance of relations with the Government of Formosa is impossible since no such relations exist'. Third, 'The future position of Austria with respect to the question of representation of China in the UN will be determined by the nature of the relationship between Austria and the [PRC] at the given moment'.⁸⁷

The PRC's ambassador seemed irritated with the first point in Austria's response, denied any Chinese claim over citizens of other countries, and went on to reaffirm the PRC's position toward Taiwan. When no agreement seemed to be possible, the Austrian ambassador changed the subject to ping-pong.⁸⁸ After a while, the PRC accepted Austria's formulation. The PRC's proposal for the joint communique contained the sentence: 'The Chinese Government respects (or supports) the neutral status of the Republic of Austria', as well as the mutually acceptable formulation: 'The Austrian Government recognizes the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China'. To this, the PRC's ambassador added, the whole world knows that the PRC regards Taiwan as an integral part of China, but with respect to Austria's neutrality the PRC excluded a formulation in this regard.⁸⁹ The Chinese text of the communiqué was translated for the Federal Government by an Austrian sinologist 'from Berlin' – circumstances indicate that the helpful translator was none other than Stasi agent Ernst Schwarz who in his career wrote several thousand pages of political reports on Austrian affairs.⁹⁰ Diplomatic relations were established on 28 May 1971.

87 Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und der Volksrepublik China [English version in the original], Vienna, 23 April 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 110.184-6(Pol)/71.

88 Tschöp to MFA, Bucharest, 26 April 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 111.131-6(Pol)/71.

89 Tschöp to MFA, Bucharest, 8 May 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 112.753-6(Pol)/71.

90 Council of Ministers, Verhandlungsschrift 53, 18 May 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BKA, MRP; Memorandum: Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen mit der VR China 9 June 1971, ÖStA,

When Ambassador Hans Thalberg was received by Zhou Enlai on 9 December, Austria had already voted for the PRC's accession to the UN on 25 October 1971.⁹¹ With regard to the ROC, the Austrian stance was that it should remain in the UN, although with another name and not in the Security Council. A summary of the Austrian MFA stated: 'While certainly not the representative of China, the government of Taiwan is in effective control of that island. Due account should be taken of this political, military and economic fact by the international community'.⁹² Thalberg, however, recommended not burdening the relations with the PRC by publicizing this thesis of Taiwan as an independent subject under international law until the great powers had also done so.⁹³ One of the reasons for this cautious strategy was that Austria did not want to endanger the candidature of Kurt Waldheim for the post of UN Secretary General. The PRC had initially opposed the Austrian candidate, then abstained, and in the third round, supported him.⁹⁴ Deputy Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua pointed out to the Austrians that the PRC had supported the Austrian candidate, although 'we only recently established diplomatic relations'.⁹⁵

In conclusion, Austria expected relations with the PRC to become as important as relations with Japan or India. Austria would have to take particular care 'that it by no means impaired the existing good relations to the Soviet Union'. The PRC had left no doubt about its strict stance with regard to Taiwan. Nonetheless, PRC–Austrian relations became generally very friendly, and the massive PRC interest in the European Economic Community (EEC), which Beijing declared to be one of the 'five centres of world politics' and which it expected to counter-balance the two superpowers, surprised the Austrians, given the low political weight of the EEC, the low US interest in the EEC at this time as well as the long-standing Soviet hostility against it.⁹⁶ They appreciated not

AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 113.267-6(Pol)/71. On Schwarz, see Archiv des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR, MfS A 239/89, 11 vols.

91 Thalberg to MFA, Beijing, 10 December 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.988-6/71, GZ. 122.660-II/71.

92 Chinafrage vor den VN; österr. Haltung, Vienna, 23. September 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 105.167-4a/71, GZ. 118.639-4a(Pol)/71.

93 Antrittsbesuche Botschafter Thalbergs bei chinesischen Funktionären, Vienna, 5 January 1972, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1972, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 150.023-6/72, GZ. 150.024-6(Pol)/72.

94 Hans J. Thalberg, *Von der Kunst, Österreicher zu sein. Erinnerungen und Tagebuchnotizen* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1984), pp. 388–395.

95 Thalberg to MFA, Beijing, 10 February 1972, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1972, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 150.023-6/72, GZ. 152.825-6(Pol)/72.

96 Österreichs Verhältnis zu den beiden Chinas, Vienna, 10 August 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, GZ. 116.726-6(Pol)/71.

only the significance of the US–PRC rapprochement (which they considered to be a ‘very healthy development’),⁹⁷ but also the consequences for the USSR. The Kremlin had aimed at containing the PRC – even if this paralleled US policy – but this strategy had utterly failed.⁹⁸ In the 1970s, Soviet–Chinese tensions regularly spilled over into Austrian diplomatic reports such as the following Romanian anecdote shows: in a nightmare, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev was said to have seen 200,000 Chinese soldiers demonstrating in Romanian uniforms on the Red Square, chanting in Czech their wish to see the new Polish Pope.⁹⁹

4 Relations with Yet Another Great Power

After recognition, bilateral relations developed rather smoothly. The first exchanges (beyond the usual day-to-day diplomatic interactions) immediately following recognition were initiated by delegations from the *Österreichisches China-Forschungsinstitut* (Austrian Institute for China Research) founded by Gerd Kaminski, an academic legal expert in Austrian–Chinese interactions. The Institute’s first delegation to the PRC in 1972 was headed by former Vice Chancellor Bruno Pittermann. Another delegation followed in 1973. These delegations and the Institute contributed to augmenting mutual knowledge; however, they were no substitute for the development of state relations.¹⁰⁰

Cultural exchange and, later, tourism were used as soft-power instruments for raising the PRC’s interest in trade with Austria. The first big coup in ‘high-culture’ was the Vienna Philharmonic’s tour to the PRC in April 1973. In return, China displayed a great archaeological exhibition in Vienna in 1973. After a temporary setback caused by the last outbursts of the Cultural Revolution in the early 1970s, the PRC State Ballet toured Austria in September 1976; the Beijing Opera followed in June 1980. Scientific exchange and cooperation also

97 Telegram Embassy Vienna to Department of State, July 1971, National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), College Park, Washington D.C., Record Group (RG) 59, Central Foreign Policy Files (CFPF) 1970–73, POL AUS, box 2103.

98 For an Austrian perspective of the strategic consequences for the United States and USSR, see Haymerle to MFA, Moscow, 25 August 1971, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1971, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 108.044-6/71, GZ. 117.278-6(Pol)/67.

99 Austrian Embassy Paris, 12 February 1979, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1979, GZ. 225.02.02/1-II.3/79.

100 See documentation in ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1973, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 150.023-6/73, GZ. 167.488-6(Pol)/73; ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, Gr.Zl. 30.741-6/73, GZ. 35.639-6(Pol)/73.

intensified only at the turn of the 1970s to the 1980s.¹⁰¹ The extent to which cultural relations, however, could create enormous trouble during the Cultural Revolution' was demonstrated by a fierce PRC critique of Michelangelo Antonioni's movie *China* (1972) and the French comedy film *Les Chinois à Paris* by Jean Yanne (1973), which had a negative effect on the PRC's relations to Italy and France.¹⁰² Sometimes conversations on cultural issues reminded Western visitors of a 'dialogue of the deaf' or 'clash of civilizations'. Austrian foreign minister Rudolf Kirchschläger experienced this during his visit to the PRC in 1974,¹⁰³ when the whole Austrian delegation still sensed the enormous violence seen in the PRC over the last decade. Nevertheless, Kirchschläger insisted on participating in a Catholic Mass in China.¹⁰⁴

Neutrality was one of the key issues in Kirchschläger's conversation with Zhou Enlai. Since 1956, Chinese leaders had praised Austria's neutrality and, in particular after the end of the alliance with the USSR, even pointed to the PRC's non-aligned status. Still, Chinese respect for Austria's neutrality was often accompanied by warnings of aggressors who would not respect it, and, in particular, of Soviet 'imperialism'.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, PRC representatives continuously recommended that Austria build a credible defence.¹⁰⁶ Zhou, who appreciated very well the differences between Switzerland's armed and Austria's rather unarmed neutrality, expressed the unreformed communist conviction that wars were unavoidable. In his conversation with Kirchschläger in 1974, he also pointed to the revolutionary potential in Europe – not only in social respects, as his interest in the German question indicated. He asked Kirchschläger whether Germans would desire national unification. When the Austrian said that 'both' Germanies were content with what they had and explicitly stated that he did not believe in reunification, Zhou declared that he did not believe that Germans would not strive for national unity. He was convinced that a revolution in Germany would be realistic in the future.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Since 1974, each country had sponsored travel grants for five exchange students per year; in 1979 the program was expanded to fifteen. After mutual visits in 1975 and 1977, the Austrian and Chinese Academies of Sciences signed agreements in 1983 and 1984, when a Austrian-PRC agreement on scientific-technical cooperation was concluded. Grundbericht China, April 1985, ÖStA AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, China, 1985.

¹⁰² Runderlass, Vienna, 23. April 1974, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1974, GZ. 502.03.19/36-6/74.

¹⁰³ MemCon Kirchschläger – Chi Peng-fei, Beijing, 5 April 1974, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1974, GZ. 502.03.19/42-6/74.

¹⁰⁴ Ludwig Steiner, *Diplomatie / Politik. Ein Leben für die Einheit Tirols. Ein Leben für Österreich 1972–2007* (Bolzano: Athesia, 2008), pp. 76–83.

¹⁰⁵ MemCon Tarter – Sung En-fan, 2 March 1977, ÖStA AdR, BMAA II-Pol, GZ. 33.03.00/9-II.3/77.

¹⁰⁶ Grundbericht China, January 1979, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1979, GZ. 33.16.01/2.II.3/79.

¹⁰⁷ MemCon Kirchschläger-Zhou Enlai, Beijing, 6 April 1974, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1974, GZ. 502.03.19/42-6/74.

In particular, after the fall of the 'Gang of Four', Austrian-Chinese relations were described by diplomats as being 'very good'.¹⁰⁸ However, visiting diplomacy increased in the 1980s only and never became mutual with regard to the standing of the respective representatives. Kirchschräger's successor Willibald Pahr visited the PRC in 1982, Vice Chancellor Norbert Steger followed in 1983, and the Austrian president in 1985;¹⁰⁹ the first visit of the Austrian head of government happened only in 1993. The first PRC governmental delegation arrived in Austria in April 1977 with the first deputy minister of trade, Yao Yilin; after some Chinese complaints, the program was upgraded, and the visitor was received by the Austrian foreign minister.¹¹⁰ The first PRC minister to visit Austria was Minister of Metallurgy Tang Ke, in 1978,¹¹¹ Deputy Foreign Minister Zhang Wenjin and Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian followed in 1980 and April 1984 respectively.

It was certainly no coincidence that the first governmental delegation from Austria after recognition was headed by Minister of Trade Josef Staribacher in November 1972, who was received by Zhou Enlai. In the course of that visit, a trade treaty was concluded.¹¹² Negotiations in later years were often not easy as Chinese bids for Austrian goods were often considered to be too low.¹¹³ Due to political developments, Chinese orders remained volatile. The periodic re-adjustment of the PRC's trade policy sometimes led to 'almost full cancellation of Austrian steel exports' to China. Moreover, the continuing ups and downs of bilateral trade were influenced by large-scale orders. In 1978 alone, VÖEST sold two entire steel plants to the PRC. Further Austrian exports consisted of steel (more than 60 per cent), machinery, synthetic fibre, cellulose, and chemicals. Austria quickly reacted to China's economic re-orientation starting in 1979. From then on, Austrian exports, which had hitherto hardly ever exceeded 500 million ATS (17.8 million USD), jumped to more than 700 (25 million USD) with peaks in 1980 with 1023 million (36.5 million USD), and 1984 with 1755 million (62.6 million USD), representing about 0.4–0.5 per cent of Austrian exports.

¹⁰⁸ MemCon Tarter – Sung En-fan, 2 March 1977, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 33.03.00/9-II.3/77.

¹⁰⁹ Grundbericht China, April 1985, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1985, GZ. 33.16.01/1-II.3/85.

¹¹⁰ VR China, Besuch einer chin. Delegation, 23 March 1977, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1977, GZ. 33.18.03/2-II.3/7.

¹¹¹ Ambassador Gredler to MFA, Beijing, 28 March 1978, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1978, GZ. 33.18.02/2-II.3/78.

¹¹² Thalberg to MFA, Beijing, 2 November 1972, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1972, VR China 2, Gr.Zl. 150.023-6/72, GZ. 165.789-6(Pol)/72. The Austrian impression and the MemCon were later communicated to the US-Embassy. Humes to Department of State, 19 April 1973, NARA, RG 59, CFPF 1970-73, POL AUS, box 2102.

¹¹³ Information für den Herrn Bundesminister, 29 April 1977, ÖStA AdR, BMAA, GZ. 33.18.03/2-II.3/77.

Austrian imports ranged from 400 to around 700 million (about 0.2–0.4 per cent of Austrian imports). The number of delegation members from Austrian companies traveling to the PRC also increased: from 51 in 1982 to 256 in 1983 and to 330 in 1984; and the Chinese representatives from 794 in 1983 to 1840 in 1984. Travel in general intensified as well, with the number of Austrian visitors to the PRC increasing from 260 in 1979 to 4000 in 1983.¹¹⁴

Sports were a typical and easy field for starting relations with the PRC. In June 1972, the 'unavoidable' ping-pong delegation travelled to Austria, and their visit was reciprocated by Austrian players in April 1977.¹¹⁵ The Austrian rematch included Chinese ski instructors and teams being trained by Austrians. The ping-pong cooperation laid the basis for future Austrian successes in this discipline, such as Werner Schlager becoming World Champion in 2003. Nonetheless, human rights violations in the PRC repeatedly raised questions as to whether participation in mega-events in China was justified. When the question of Austria's participation at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 came up, Schlager rejected the idea of boycotting the games, arguing that 'in this specific case', it would not be appropriate. At the same time, Schlager pleased the anti-American spectrum by announcing that he had already for years been boycotting the United States. The interviewer did not take note of the inconsistency.¹¹⁶ Schlager's example, at least since recognition, also reflects an increasingly cautious Austrian stance toward the youngest 'great power'.

5 Conclusion

Austria was ready to recognize the PRC early on; this however was prevented by considerations about four-power control and the Cold War, then by the outbreak of the Korean War, and after 1955 by the Austrian wish neither to forfeit the ROC's support for Austria's UN membership and IAEA bids, nor to burden the relations with the United States. Recognition was instigated by a general trend in international relations in 1971 as well as by an Austrian hope for trade opportunities. As with other large communist countries, Austrian expectations regarding trade volumes were exaggerated. Austria's intention of balancing recognition of the PRC with support for Taiwan's UN membership was soon abandoned. The PRC was interested in gaining support for its UN membership

¹¹⁴ Grundbericht China, April 1985, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1985, GZ. 33.16.01/1-II.3/85. On the trade volume, see Nasi, 'Bilaterale Beziehungen', pp. 51–54, 61–63, 72–74.

¹¹⁵ Grundbericht China, April 1985, ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1985, GZ. 33.16.01/1-II.3/85.

¹¹⁶ "Ich nehme an keinen Veranstaltungen in den USA teil," *Der Standard*, 3 April 2008.

bid as well as in purchasing technology abroad. PRC representatives often pointed to both countries' 'non-aligned' status; by warning Austria of Soviet aggressiveness, the PRC intended to distance Austria from the USSR and draw it nearer to the PRC.

Official relations improved from the late 1970s and trade volumes increased, as Austria aimed at making trade more profitable. The 1989 massacre on Tiananmen Square served as an indication that communist regimes were about to collapse in Eastern Europe, but not on a global scale. Meanwhile the PRC had advanced on its path to become an economic giant, and Austria was interested in benefiting from this process. As with relations with the USSR and now with Russia, Austria focused on economic benefits, while mentioning humanitarian and political misgivings only on the side-lines of high-level encounters.

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Small Country – Great Importance: Switzerland and the Chinese Presence in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s

Ariane Knüsel

Switzerland could be described as the dark horse in Sino-European relations during the Cold War. At first glance, Switzerland does not seem to have played a major role in Chinese foreign or economic relations with Western Europe. After all, commercial relations were negligible and, politically speaking, countries like France, West Germany and Britain seemed to be much more important for Chinese foreign policy. It is no wonder then, that Sino-Swiss relations in the Cold War have so far received little scholarly attention.¹ In fact, most academic publications on Sino-European relations during the Cold War completely overlook Switzerland. However, a closer look at the available archival sources shows that Switzerland actually played a crucial role in several aspects of Sino-European relations in the 1950s and 1960s: It was the most important hub for Chinese diplomatic and business networks as well as for Chinese intelligence and propaganda networks in Western Europe during this period.

Instead of presenting a chronological overview of Sino-Swiss relations in the Cold War, which would give more prominence to general Sino-Swiss bilateral relations,² this paper will take on a more European focus and will discuss specific aspects that exemplify Switzerland's unique status for the People's Republic of China (PRC)³ among Western European powers in the 1950s and

1 Academic publications include: Ariane Knüsel, 'Beijing's Headquarters in Europe? Sino-Swiss Relations in the 1950s and 1960s', in *Sino-European Relations and the Cold War*, edited by Christian Ostermann, Enrico Fardella and Charles Kraus (Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center, forthcoming); Ariane Knüsel, 'Armé de la pensée de Mao Tsé-toung, on peut résoudre tous les problèmes: l'influence de la Révolution culturelle sur les relations entre la Suisse et la République populaire de Chine', *Relations internationales* 163, no. 3 (2015): pp. 29–46; Ariane Knüsel, *Framing China: Political Debates and Media Images in the USA, Britain and Switzerland, 1900–1950* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Michele Coduri, *La Suisse face à la Chine: une continuité impossible? 1946–1955* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Bruylant-Academia, 2004); Regula Stämpfli, 'Die Schweiz und China, 1945–1950', *Studien und Quellen* 13, no. 14 (1988): pp. 163–224.

2 For such a chronological overview see Knüsel, 'Beijing's Headquarters in Europe?.'

3 In this paper, I am using 'China' to refer to the PRC and 'Taiwan' to refer to the Republic of China.

1960s. The paper will, therefore, first outline the role of Switzerland as a hub for the negotiation of political and economic relations between the PRC and Western European countries, followed by Switzerland's importance for Chinese intelligence, propaganda and subversion networks, and, lastly, the issue of Tibetan refugees in Switzerland, which was unique among Western European countries.

One reason why Switzerland's importance for China has so far been ignored could be the problematic access to archival sources. The Chinese Foreign Ministry Archive is currently closed to researchers, while other local archives such as the Shanghai Municipal Archive have severely restricted access to their files, leaving researchers mostly sifting through report after report on visits by cultural or economic delegations. Since in general printed and digital collections of Chinese archival sources contain hardly any documents relating to Switzerland,⁴ most of the currently available sources are in the Swiss Federal Archives. Although the Swiss Federal Archives are open to researchers, the documents relating to Sino-Swiss relations require historians to be able to read several languages (French, German, Chinese, Italian and English), and certain documents (e.g. most documents relating to intelligence, subversion and propaganda networks) can only be accessed with special permission. A further problem is that eyewitness accounts are almost impossible to obtain, as most Swiss who were active in political or economic decisions regarding China during this time have passed away or are no longer willing or able to give interviews, while the few Chinese memoirs that are available follow the official Chinese portrayals of Sino-Swiss relations or of Chinese foreign policy very closely.⁵ Finally, information about Chinese espionage networks and subversive activities in Europe is extremely difficult to come by because it remains

4 A notable exception is Lian Zhengbao, Wang Jingtang, Huang Taopeng 廉正保, 王景堂, 黄韬鹏 (eds.). 1949-1955 *Jiemi waijiao wenxian: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianjiao dang'an, 1949-1955* 解密外交文献: 中华人民共和国建交档案 [Declassified Diplomatic Documents: Records on the Establishment of China's Diplomatic Relations 1949-1955] (Beijing 北京: Zhongguo huabao chubanshe 中国画报出版社 [China Pictorial Publishing House], 2006).

5 Li Feiyi 李斐仪, "Yi chushi ruishi de Feng Xuan" 忆出使瑞士的冯铨 [Remembering Feng Xuan's diplomatic mission in Switzerland], *Dangdai zhongguo shijie waijiao shengya* 当代中国使节外交生涯 [Diplomatic Careers of Contemporary Chinese Envoys], vol. 1 (Beijing 北京: Shijie zhishi chubanshe 世界知识出版社 [World Affairs Press], 1995); Li Qingquan 李清泉, "Zhongfa jiantan pan hui ti" 中法建交谈判回顾 [Remembering the discussions about establishing Sino-French Diplomatic Relations], *Dangdai zhongguo shijie waijiao shengya* 当代中国使节外交生涯, vol. 2 (Beijing 北京: Shijie zhishi chubanshe 世界知识出版社 [World Affairs Press], 1995); Li Qingquan 李清泉, "Ruishi qi nian" 瑞士七年 [Seven years in Switzerland], *Waijiao xueyan xuebao* 外交学院学报 [Foreign Affairs Review] 1 (1997): 60-64.

a very sensitive topic in China and, even in most Western archives, relevant documents remain classified.

1 Switzerland as a Diplomatic and Business Hub

The Swiss government recognized the PRC on 17 January 1950 and was the fifth Western nation to do so.⁶ Neither the Swiss parliament nor the press reacted negatively to the recognition. One reason for the quick recognition was that it was common policy for the Swiss government to recognize governments that seemed to be in long-term control of their territory and enjoyed their society's support. Another reason was that the Swiss government wanted to protect Swiss citizens, as well as Swiss economic and material interests, in China and increase trade with the newly formed PRC government. Accordingly, the sooner Switzerland recognized the PRC, the better its standing with the communist regime would be, which would hopefully result in fewer measures against Swiss companies and more commercial deals.⁷ A further reason was connected to Swiss neutrality, which had become such a crucial part of Swiss national identity that it caused strong opposition to supranational alliances in the post-war period. Using the slogan 'neutrality and solidarity' as well as the maxim of universality, Federal Councillor Max Petitpierre, the Head of the Federal Political Department (the Swiss Foreign Ministry), tried to steer Switzerland out of international isolation by legitimizing economic collaboration with the Western powers as well as recognition of countries from the Eastern bloc.⁸ Although the Swiss government and the public were strongly anti-communist and clearly sided with the Western countries ideologically, the Swiss government ensured at least a nominal diplomatic neutrality by having diplomatic relations with both Eastern and Western countries, and made a point of recognizing

6 Petitpierre (Bern) to Mao (Beijing), 17 January 1950, *Diplomatische Dokumente der Schweiz*, 1848 ff., Online Datenbank Dodis: dodis.ch/8016.

7 'Résumé des délibérations de la conférence réunie le 2 juin 1950 pour examiner la question de la création, du renforcement ou de la fermeture de certaines représentations officielles suisses à l'étranger', 2 June 1950, dodis.ch/8115. See also Coduri, *La Suisse*, pp. 103–106 for deliberations in 1949.

8 Charles Oser, 'Haltung der Schweiz im Ost-West Handel', 27 July 1951, dodis.ch/7230; Rudolf Bindschedler, 'Der Begriff der Neutralität', 5 April 1951, dodis.ch/9565. See also Thomas Fischer and Daniel Möckli, 'The Limits of Compensation: Swiss Neutrality Policy in the Cold War', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (2016): pp. 12–22; Daniel Trachsler, *Bundesrat Max Petitpierre: Schweizerische Aussenpolitik im Kalten Krieg 1945–1961* (Zürich: NZZ Libro, 2011), pp. 100–127; Marco Wyss, *Arms Transfers, Neutrality and Britain's Role in the Cold War: Anglo-Swiss Relations 1945–1958* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 22 and p. 43.

almost all countries belonging to the Eastern bloc.⁹ Thus, while the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 was interpreted as a huge victory for the Soviet Union in the Cold War and led to shock in the United States, for Switzerland, it seemed a unique opportunity to establish itself as a neutral mediator between East and West and to boost the reputation of Swiss neutrality in an international setting. As a result, Switzerland ignored US opposition to the newly founded PRC, and instead coordinated its recognition of the PRC with Great Britain.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the leaders of the newly founded PRC adopted a non-recognition policy, refusing to continue the diplomatic relations of Nationalist China (Taiwan). According to the One-China Policy, countries that wanted to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC had to cease all official relations with Taiwan. Moreover, all bilateral relations were to be on a reciprocal basis; commercial relations had to be mutually beneficial; and any form of 'foreign imperialism' (i.e. foreign presence and influence or interference in Chinese affairs) had to be stopped.¹¹ While Switzerland was not a priority in Chinese foreign relations, its neutrality and weak presence in pre-PRC China meant that it was regarded with more goodwill by the Communist leaders than were Britain, France and West Germany. Additionally, its location in central Europe and the fact that various international organizations like the United Nations had their (European) headquarters in Switzerland meant that China could meet officials and citizens from other countries if it had diplomatic missions there.¹²

Diplomatic relations officially began in September 1950, with Sven Stiner as Swiss Chargé d'Affaires ad interim in Beijing and Feng Xuan as Envoy

9 With the exception of the German Democratic Republic, North Vietnam and North Korea, see: Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, Marco Wyss, Sandra Bott, 'Choosing Sides in the Global Cold War. Switzerland, Neutrality and the Divided States of Vietnam and Korea', *International History Review* 37, no. 5 (2015): pp. 1014–1036.

10 Consul-General Koch (Shanghai) to Federal Political Department (Bern), 5 October 1949, SEA E2001E#1967/113#2130*; Federal Political Departement, 'Mitteilung', 11 February 1950, SEA E2001E#1967/113#2130*; Vincent (Bern) to Department of State (Washington D.C.), 17 January 1950, Classified General Records, USNA RG 84, Box 83, UD 3208; 'Recognition of the Chinese Communist Government', 12 December 1949, TNA CAB 21/3273; 'Cabinet Meeting Conclusions', 15 December 1949, TNA CAB 128/16; 'Minute from Bevin to Attlee', 23 December 1949, TNA PREM 8/1334. See also Knüsel, *Framing China*, pp. 239–249.

11 Li (Beijing) to Petitpierre (Bern), 9 February 1950, in: Lian, Wang, Huang: *Jiemi waijiao wenxian*, p. 392. See also: Zhang Baijia, 'Zhou Enlai – The Shaper and Founder of China's Diplomacy', in *Toward a History of Chinese Communist Foreign Relations, 1920s–1960s: Personalities and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Michael Hunt and Niu Jun (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, Asia Program 1992), p. 77.

12 Li, 'Yi chushi ruishi de Feng Xuan', pp. 173–174; Li, *Ruishi qi nian*, p. 63.

Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Bern.¹³ In April 1952, a Swiss Consulate was opened in Shanghai,¹⁴ followed by a Chinese Consulate-General in Geneva in March 1954.¹⁵ The early establishment of Sino-Swiss relations along with Swiss neutrality had the effect that, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Switzerland had better standing with China than it had with most other Western European nations.¹⁶ The Swiss government was also regarded by many Western countries as a source of accurate and insightful information about the PRC.¹⁷

Relations between the two countries were further improved when Switzerland participated in the neutral committee and the surveillance commission in the Korean War and organized the Geneva Conference in 1954, during which Federal Councillor Petitpierre, the head of Swiss Foreign relations, met Premier Zhou Enlai.¹⁸ As a result of the cordial relations between the two countries, Swiss diplomats tended to have better access to Chinese ministers than most other Western diplomats in Beijing, and Switzerland was often described as a good place for conferences and negotiations by Zhou and Vice Premier, later Foreign Minister, Chen Yi.¹⁹ During the Cultural Revolution, for example, when Chinese foreign relations grew tense, the Chinese government and the Red Guards refrained from attacking the Embassy building, Swiss diplomats or their possessions, and the Swiss diplomats were also treated much better than other European diplomats by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.²⁰

13 Li, "Yi chushi ruishi de Feng Xuan", p. 172; Mao and Zhou (Beijing) to Petitpierre (Bern), 18 September 1950, in: Lian, Wang, Huang, *Jiemi waijiao wenxian*, p. 408; Federal Political Department, 'Résumé', 2 June 1950, dodis.ch/8115; Stiner (Beijing) to Federal Political Department, 24 July 1950, dodis.ch/8272; Bazaretti (Bern) to Kurts (Basel), 5 September 1950, dodis.ch/8209.

14 'Notice pour le Service du Protocole', 3 April 1952, SFA E2001E#1976/17#2085*.

15 'Sitzung des Bundesrates vom 11.3.1954', 11 March 1954, SFA E2001E#1976/17#2085*.

16 Li, "Yi chushi ruishi de Feng Xuan", p. 173; Keller (Beijing) to Federal Political Department (Bern), 'Peking feiert 15 Jahre Neues China', 6 October 1964, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2384*. See also: Home News Library of the Xinhua News Agency, *China's Foreign Relations: A Chronology of Events (1949-1988)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1989), 449 and 404.

17 See for example Kohli, 'Notiz. Besuch des französischen Botschafters', 19 December 1958, SFA E2001E#1972/33#7873*, Koren, 'Swiss Report on Business Life in Shanghai', 21 November 1952, USNA, RG84 Box 87, UD 3208.

18 Keller, 'Les debuts de nos relations diplomatiques avec la Republique populaire de Chine', Nachlass Hans Keller, box 7, AfZ; 8175; Petitpierre, 'Entretien avec M. Chou-en-Lai, Premier Ministre de la République populaire de Chine, le samedi 12 juin 1954, à 11 h. 40', 12 June 1954, dodis.ch/8175; Rezzonico (Beijing) to Petitpierre (Bern), 'Politischer Bericht', 30 June 1954, dodis.ch/8216.

19 Naville to Petitpierre, 'Rapport politique No. 4', 25 March 1960, SFA E2300#1000/716#812*; Naville (Beijing) to Petitpierre (Bern), 2 August 1960, SFA E2300#1000/716#812*.

20 Hugentobler, 'Politischer Brief', 6 February 1967, SFA E2001-05#1979/137#36*. See also: Knüsel, 'Armée de la pensée de Mao'.

Although Sino-Swiss trade was negligible from the 1950s to the 1970s, amounting to less than three per cent of each country's total foreign trade,²¹ Swiss companies and officials continued to be fascinated by the lure of the China market. In 1956, the Swiss minister in Beijing reminded the Swiss government of China and its '600 (and in a few years already 800) million "consumers"'.²² This fascination with the China market was fairly typical for all European powers and explains why the opening of Chinese commercial offices in the Scandinavian countries, Britain, and Switzerland in 1954 was met with such interest among Western European companies and businessmen.²³ Switzerland's location in central Europe made it an ideal destination for European diplomats and businessmen wishing to negotiate with Chinese diplomats or representatives of trade agencies. Thus, the Chinese commercial office in Bern was widely regarded as the most important one in all of Europe.²⁴ The Sino-Soviet Split caused Beijing to further attempt to improve political and economic relations with Western European countries in order to compensate for deteriorating relations with Eastern European countries (most of which sided with the Soviet Union).²⁵ As a result, Chinese trade delegations to Switzerland as well as business meetings in Switzerland between Chinese and European businessmen increased in the early 1960s.²⁶

21 *Dangdai zhongguo duiwai maoyi* 当代中国对外贸易 (Beijing 北京: Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe 当代中国出版社, 1992); 'L.21. Einfuhrwerte nach Ursprungsländern 1920-1992 (in Millionen Franken): Asien' and 'L.25. Ausfuhrwerte nach Verbrauchsländern 1920-1992 (in Millionen Franken): Asien', Historical statistics of Switzerland online <http://www.fsw.uzh.ch/hstat/nls_rev/ls_files.php?chapter_var=/I>.

22 Bernoulli, 'Wirtschaftsbeziehungen mit China', 26 June 1956, dodis.ch/11574.

23 Zhang, *Statecraft*, 39–52 and 99–102.

24 Armory, 'EXCON : Semi-Annual Appraisal of Significant Developments in Swiss Politico-Economic Relations with the Sino-soviet Bloc, January 1- June 20, 1962', USNA, 1960-1963 CDF, RG 59, Box 1350, 654.60/12-1862; Chinese Embassy (Bern) to EPD (Bern), 16 December 1960, SEA E2001E#1976/17#2085*; Rezzonico (Beijing) to Abteilung für politische Angelegenheiten (Bern), 5 January 1961, SEA E2001E#1976/17#2085*; Handelsabteilung (Bern) to EPD (Bern), 1 January 1961, SEA E2001E#1976/17#2085*.

25 Keller, 'Politischer Bericht No. 6', 9 June 1964, SEA E2300#1000/716#815*. On the Sino-Soviet Split see Li Mingjiang, 'Ideological dilemma: Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet split, 1962-63', *Cold War History* 11, no. 3 (2010): pp. 387–419; Chen Jian, 'The Beginning of the End: 1956 as a Turning Point in Chinese and Cold War History', *Modern China Studies* 22, no. 1 (2015): pp. 99–126; Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

26 Keller (Beijing) to Stopper (Bern), 30 May 1963, E2200.174-02#1981/200#325*.

Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, many – if not most – PRC diplomatic and business contacts with Western Europeans were cultivated and maintained in meetings taking place in Switzerland. The 1960s also witnessed a growing number of conversations between Italian, French and West German diplomats and their Chinese counterparts in Bern and Geneva, eventually leading to the opening of Sino-French relations in 1964, Sino-Italian relations in 1970, and Sino-German relations in 1972. During the negotiation phases, politicians and diplomats often used trips to UN meetings in Geneva as a means of meeting up with Chinese diplomats.²⁷

Switzerland also played a role in Chinese relations with African and Latin American countries. Jeremy Friedman has shown that the Sino-Soviet Split increased Beijing's interest in Africa and Latin America because the PRC sought to replace the Soviet Union as the communist leader in the developing world. As a result, China embarked on a massive charm offensive that included official visits, student and cultural delegations, commercial deals, financial assistance and military training, as well as a huge amount of propaganda that targeted these specific countries.²⁸ Switzerland was a fairly important background player in these efforts: firstly, the Chinese Embassy was used as a meeting point for African and Chinese diplomats. Secondly, Chinese officials filed reports about the situation in African countries in Switzerland. Thirdly, Swiss banks were often used for financial transactions with African governments and rebel groups. Fourthly, Switzerland served as a transit destination for Chinese officials heading to Africa. In fact, even before Swissair began flying to Chinese cities in 1975, Switzerland was an extremely common transit destination for Chinese officials travelling from China to Europe, Africa, and Latin America and vice versa. Finally, as will be shown below, some of the propaganda destined for Africa and Latin America was shipped via Switzerland or smuggled through the country.²⁹

27 Li, "Yi chushi ruishi de Feng Xuan", pp. 173–174; Gygas (Warsaw) to Abteilung für politische Angelegenheiten (Bern), 29 October 1957, SFA E2001E#1976/17#2085*; Li, "Ruishi qi nian", p. 63. See also, Majonica, *Bonn-Peking*, pp. 90–111; Sofia Graziani, 'L'interesse politico/ideologico per la Cina di Mao sulla scia del contrasto sino-sovietico: alcune considerazioni sulla nascita dell'Associazione Italia-Cina (1962–1963)', in *La Cina di Mao, l'Italia e l'Europa negli anni della Guerra fredda*, edited by Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Guido Samarani (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2014), pp. 165–167; Camilla Rocca, 'Enrico Mattei a Pechino: diplomazia parallela e interessi economici in un mondo che cambia', in *La Cina di Mao, l'Italia e l'Europa negli anni della Guerra fredda*, edited by Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Guido Samarani (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2014) pp. 71–73; Li, *Zhongfa jiantan pan hui ti*, pp. 199–219; Krouck, *DeGaulle*, pp. 283–293.

28 Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*.

29 Li, "Ruishi qi nian", p. 63; letter from 6 August 1964, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2313*; 'Rotchinesische Propaganda in Westeuropa', *Argumente Dokumente Zitate* 23/64, 19 May 1964;

The crucial role that the Chinese Embassy in Bern and the Consulate in Geneva had for the Chinese presence in Western Europe can also be seen in the size of the Chinese staff. The PRC's missions in Switzerland had the second highest number of staff of all foreign missions. Although there were repeated claims by Swiss politicians that the high number of staff was also due to Chinese agents posing as diplomatic personnel, the Swiss government argued that Switzerland's location made the PRC Embassy and Consulate the primary location in Western Europe for French, Germans, Italians and Austrians wishing to contact Chinese authorities. Moreover, Switzerland was used by Beijing to train future diplomats and interpreters.³⁰ By the mid-1960s, however, the Swiss government felt that the opening of the PRC Embassy in Paris warranted a reduction in diplomatic staff in Switzerland because Switzerland was no longer the only Central European country with a Chinese embassy. Expecting Paris to take over a considerable part of China's administrative, business and political dealings with Western Europe, the Swiss government, decided to reject further applications for PRC embassy staff visas unless they were replacements of existing officials.³¹

While Switzerland did play a crucial role in the setting up of political relations and business deals with Western European countries, it lost importance for China in the 1970s after the thawing of relations with the United States and China's admission to the UN led most remaining Western European countries to scramble to take up relations with Beijing. Thus, by 1973, the PRC had established diplomatic missions in most European countries, and also opened direct channels for commercial communication in each country. As a result, Switzerland lost its unique role as a hub for Chinese relations with Western Europe.

2 Switzerland as an Espionage, Subversion and Propaganda Hub

During the Cold War, Switzerland was a popular location for espionage. The concentration of such a large number of diplomatic missions from the Eastern and Western bloc, along with the UN's European headquarters made it an excellent spot for spying on diplomats, gathering information about other

Keller, 'Ausbau des chinesischen Aussendienstes, besonders in Afrika und Europa', 15 May 1964, SFA E2200.56-02#1978/15#101*.

30 Fischli, 'Nationalrätliche Kommission für auswärtige Angelegenheiten. Protokoll der Sitzung vom 31.5.1957', 31 May 1957, dodis.ch/11693; Petitpierre, 'Antwort auf die von Herrn Nationalrat Duttweiler für die nächste Sitzung der Kommission für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten gestellte Frage betreffend die chinesische Handelsdelegation in Bern', 19 July 1957, SFA E2001E#1976/17#2085*.

31 Dumont, 'Chefbeamtenbesprechung vom 27.1.1966', 31 January 1966, dodis.ch/31993.

nations, and meeting sources from other countries who were in town for a UN conference or meeting. The CIA, MI6, KGB and Stasi, as well as various other secret services, had agents on the ground.³² While the Swiss government tolerated Western spies to a certain extent, this was not the case for spies from the Eastern bloc. Whenever Eastern bloc spies were caught or Eastern bloc diplomats were found to be engaging in intelligence work in Switzerland, they were expelled.³³

Swiss counter-espionage was organised on several federal levels. The Swiss Office of the Attorney General (OAG) was officially in charge of surveilling activities that potentially threatened Swiss internal and external security. Although the OAG had its own police force (the Federal Police), surveillance tasks were usually delegated to local police forces in cantons and cities. Moreover, local police were called upon to dig up information on potential spies as well as subversive or otherwise suspect elements. In addition, the OAG collaborated with police forces and intelligence agencies from various Western countries, and had contacts all over the world who provided information about specific people and organisations who had caught the eye of the Federal Police. Typical of Switzerland's dominant anti-communist sentiment was that Swiss counter-espionage activities deemed Eastern bloc espionage and subversion a more important threat than Western bloc espionage. This also explains why Swiss measures against potential Chinese spies and agents were so wide-ranging and thorough.

By the 1960s, the Chinese had established Switzerland as a hub for their Western European spy network. Informants and agents from Western Europe, and in some cases even Africa and Latin America, went to the PRC Embassy in Bern and the Consulate in Geneva to meet their Chinese contacts, file reports or hand over documents. The OAG tried to prevent known Chinese spies from entering Switzerland but the Chinese visa applications usually contained no Chinese characters, which made background checks from Hong Kong and

32 Kern, 'Vortrag von Herrn Oberstleutnant Kern über Sicherheitsprobleme anlässlich der Botschaftertagung 1964', 4 September 1964, dodis.ch/30820. See also Luc Van Dongen, 'De la place de la Suisse dans la 'guerre froide secrète' des Etats-Unis, 1943-1975', in *Traverse* 2, edited by Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl and Mario König (2009), pp. 55-72; Riccardo Tarli, *Operationsgebiet Schweiz: Die dunklen Geschäfte der Stasi* (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 2015).

33 Warren P. Blumberg, 'Politico-Economic Relations with the Sino-Soviet Bloc', 26 June 1962, 654.60/6-2662, 1960-1963 CDF, RG 59 USNA; Nationalrat Wintersession 1953, 'Kleine Anfrage Grütter Alfred vom 15. September 1953: Antwort des Bundesrates', 24 November 1953, dodis.ch/9546; Janner, 'Besuch von Minister Obhlidal bei Generalsekretär Micheli betreffend Smisek', 20 September 1961, dodis.ch/38338; Probst, 'Gespräch mit Sowjetbotschafter Kourioukine', 21 May 1960, dodis.ch/15325; Janner, Letter, 14 June 1962, SFA E2200.174-02#1981/200#81*.

cross-checks with Swiss registers of suspicious people very difficult, since Chinese names were not always transcribed identically.³⁴

A lack of literature on this subject makes it difficult to determine how unusual the Chinese intelligence presence in Switzerland was regarding both Chinese espionage in Europe and general foreign espionage in Switzerland. Switzerland was by no means the only European location relevant for Chinese intelligence. Belgium in particular seems to have also been used as a hub for intelligence operations.³⁵ However, it is certainly notable that in the 1950s and 1960s, newspapers across the world regularly printed sensational stories of Switzerland as a hotbed of Chinese espionage. Yet, the Swiss government was convinced that these reports were grossly exaggerated and lacked any evidence. For example, in 1965 an official from the Political Department stated that a sensational American newspaper story with the catchy title 'Red China's Spy Center'³⁶ was 'quite imaginative', with the journalist ignoring the issue of whether or not he could actually prove his claims, instead being inspired by the James Bond film *Goldfinger*.³⁷

Since most of the relevant documents about Chinese espionage are in archives that are closed or in files that are still classified, historians currently have to rely on Swiss documents to determine the role Switzerland played in China's intelligence operations in the West. Based on these files, it seems likely that the Chinese used Switzerland as a hub for their intelligence network mostly to gather intelligence on Taiwanese nationals in Europe, PRC civilians, and in some instances also on other Asians in Europe. The Chinese government seems to have been particularly interested in grooming PRC and Taiwanese scientists and students in Europe as informants, usually paying them for their services and often also giving their family preferential treatment in China. Many Taiwanese lived in Geneva or visited Geneva often (for example for UN meetings), which could explain why Switzerland was chosen as a central point for such a network.³⁸

In 1955, French claims that Swiss counter-intelligence was too passive against spies from the Eastern bloc were met with harsh criticism by the Swiss Attorney General. While he felt that the PRC Embassy and Consulate should

34 See for example Kommisariat IV (Bern) to Babey (Bern), 19 November 1965, SEA E4320C #1994/78#691*.

35 See for example Cuenoud, 'Restaurants chinois en Belgique', 13 March 1963, SEA E2001E #1976/17#2071*.

36 *Parade* 22 November 22, 1964.

37 Zimmermann (Bern) to Schori-Loosli (Erlach), 6 July 1965, SEA E2001E#1978/84#2315*.

38 See for example Babey (Bern), report, 3 June 1966, SEA E2001E#1978/84#2318*. For a Chinese explanation of these contacts see Li, "Yi chushi ruishi de Feng Xuan", p. 174.

be put under surveillance, he stated that this was difficult due to the Chinese language and similar physical features.³⁹ Nevertheless, extensive surveillance of both locations began in the 1950s, leading to thousands of files on visitors to the Embassy and Consulate, phone surveillance, and also personal surveillance of Chinese diplomats and suspected spies. Surveillance increased further in the 1960s, particularly when the Federal Police began employing a Chinese translator from 1962, in order to translate recorded phone conversations between officials in Bern and Geneva, and with employees of the Xinhua News Agency. The surveillance of all potential spies, handlers and informants was a very expensive and extensive undertaking that not only required more personnel, but also up-to-date intelligence technology like teleobjectives, listening devices etc. Moreover, the Federal Police collaborated with Swiss local police forces as well as with intelligence agencies and police forces from Western countries in their attempts to reconstruct the Chinese intelligence networks in Europe.⁴⁰ The few Chinese spies that were actually caught were arrested and expelled. However, it was rather difficult for the Swiss government to take effective actions against Chinese diplomats because they enjoyed immunity, and any action against a PRC diplomat threatened not only to deteriorate relations with China, but also to endanger Swiss diplomats in China, who could become victims of Chinese retribution.⁴¹

Switzerland was also a hub for Beijing's European, if not global, propaganda network. As has been mentioned previously, Chinese propaganda was sent via Switzerland to Africa and Latin America, particularly in the 1960s, when the Sino-Soviet Split caused China to increase its focus on Africa and Latin America. Although it is unclear what percentage of overall PRC propaganda for Africa and Latin America went via Switzerland, it is evident that at least a small part of it was printed in Switzerland as well as transported to those countries via Switzerland. Some of it was even sent on Swissair planes flying to Switzerland from Hong Kong.⁴²

Not all Chinese propaganda was deemed to be problematic. For example, the PRC Embassy in Bern published about 4,000 issues of its *Bulletin D'Information* each month, and communist bookstores such as Pinkus & Cie in Zurich or the Librairie Rousseau in Geneva sold Chinese publications.⁴³ The OAG did not take actions against these publications, but only against Chinese propaganda

39 Dubois (Bern) to Feldmann (Bern), 11 November 1955, dodis.ch/11418.

40 'Aktennotiz', 9 October 1962, SEA E2001E#1976/17#200*.

41 See for example report on Chen Wen-Kuei, 12 February 1968, dodis.ch/33537.

42 Amstein (Bern) to Irminger (Zurich), 28 July 1966, SEA E4320C# 1994/78#710*.

43 Amstein (Bern) to Politische Angelegenheiten, EPD (Bern), 6 August 1964, SEA E2001E #1978/84#2313*.

that used Switzerland as a transit point. Widespread anti-communism and fears of communist subversion had led to a law against the distribution of treasonous foreign communist propaganda in 1948.⁴⁴ When over 1,000 issues of PRC propaganda publications destined for Congo-Léopoldville, Chile, Costa Rica, and Panama from Guozi Shudian in Beijing were confiscated in Geneva in January 1961, Swiss officials feared that Switzerland could become a port of call for communist propaganda, which could affect Swiss relations with the countries receiving the propaganda.⁴⁵ As a result, the Federal Council authorized the OAG to confiscate propaganda material destined for other countries for which Switzerland served as a transshipment point, as well as propaganda material produced in Switzerland but destined for other countries.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, by 1963, the Federal Police were forced to admit that Bern had increasingly become 'the propaganda headquarters of the PR of China in Central Europe'.⁴⁷ Less than a year later, however, the Federal Police landed a coup with the confiscation of 186 parcels (628 kg) of Chinese propaganda material sent to the Librairie Rousseau, which was supposed to send it on to Latin America and Africa.⁴⁸ In the same year, the propaganda magazine *Africa, Latin America, Asia: Revolution*, which was printed in Switzerland by the pro-Chinese communist Nils Andersson, was prohibited. After Andersson had ignored an ultimatum by the Swiss authorities, he was eventually expelled from Switzerland in 1966.⁴⁹

People who were caught smuggling Chinese propaganda material across the border were also arrested, their houses or apartments were searched, and their potential contacts investigated, in order to uncover not only the Swiss but also the international dimensions of the propaganda networks. Contrary to the Chinese intelligence network or the industrial espionage network, the propaganda network relied on European Maoists both from Switzerland and from neighbouring countries to produce and transport propaganda. Foreigners

44 Boris Burri, 'Notrechtliches Vorgehen gegen die Kommunisten: Der Umgang der Schweizer Behörden mit ausländischer Propaganda nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg (1945-1953)', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 54, no. 2 (2004): pp. 161–166; Neval, 'Mit Atombomben bis nach Moskau', p. 602 and pp. 625–628.

45 Von Moos, 'Betr. Einziehung von beschlagnahmtem Propagandamaterial', 18 January 1961, SEA E4320C#1994/78#704*.

46 'Aus- und Durchfuhr von Propagandaschrift der chinesischen Kommunisten verboten', 12 August 1964, SEA E2200.174-02#1981/200#82*.

47 Kommissariat IV, 'Notiz', 10 October 1963, SEA E4320C#1994/78#710*.

48 Amstein (Bern) to Politische Angelegenheiten, EPD (Bern), 6 August 1964, SEA E2001E#1978/84#2313*.

49 Department of Justice and Police (Bern) to Federal Council (Bern), 25 June 1964, SEA E2200.174-02#1981/200#82*; Federal Council, decree, 2 May 1967, dodis.ch/32951.

living in Switzerland who smuggled Chinese propaganda into or out of Switzerland were threatened with expulsion.⁵⁰

The people involved in the smuggling of propaganda material were not the only Maoists in contact with the Embassy in Bern and the Consulate in Geneva. From the mid-1960s, the Maoist wave that swept through Western Europe caused more members of Maoist organizations to visit the Chinese missions in Switzerland. Most of the foreign visitors came from neighbouring countries (i.e. France, Italy, West Germany). They, as well as the Swiss visiting the missions, seem to have received small amounts of money and instructions, as well as invitations to travel to China. The Federal Police kept Swiss Maoist organizations under surveillance and local police forces searched and interrogated known foreign Maoists who visited the Embassy and the Consulate. Often, they were later expelled from Switzerland for illegal political activity and given entry barriers. This was harshly criticized by the Chinese diplomats in Switzerland, who claimed that China did not intervene in other countries' domestic issues.⁵¹

3 Tibetan Refugees in Switzerland

While the previous sections have dealt with the unique role that Switzerland played in Sino-European relations, this section will discuss a way in which Switzerland stood out among Western European countries in its bilateral relations with the PRC. Most countries focused on improving commercial relations with China and had to deal with Chinese espionage and Maoist organisations, yet only Swiss relations with the PRC were dominated to such a degree by the issue of Tibetan refugees in the 1960s.⁵² During the Tibetan Rebellion of March 1959, the Dalai Lama escaped to India and about 700,000 Tibetans became refugees in India and Nepal. Sino-Indian relations had already been tense before, but now they got worse, ending in an armed border conflict in the autumn of 1959, as well as Chinese claims that India had meddled in China's internal affairs.⁵³

50 Furrer, 'Rotchinesische Propaganda', 11 March 1966, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2315*; 'Verfügung', 29 December 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#710*.

51 Babey, 'Intervention à l'encontre de 3 ressortissants français, membres influents de la Fédération des cercles marxistes-léninistes de France', 22 June 1965, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2315*; Zimmermann (Bern) to Keller (Beijing), June 30, 1965, SFA E2200.174-02#1981/200#82*.

52 See also Knüsel, 'Armé de la pensée Mao', pp. 36-39.

53 Chen Jian, 'The Tibetan Rebellion of 1959 and China's Changing Relations with India and the Soviet Union', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 3 (2006): pp. 54-101; Lüthi, *Sino-Soviet Split*, pp. 138-146.

In Switzerland, news of the Tibetan Rebellion was met with great interest and a tremendous amount of sympathy for the refugees, because the Swiss public interpreted the Tibetan Rebellion – like the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 – as a people rising up against an unwanted communist regime that had been forced upon them. As a result, the Swiss Federal Council decided in 1963 to allow up to 1000 Tibetan refugees to settle in Switzerland (particular care was taken to allow entire families to immigrate) and it supported Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal. On a private basis, two houses for Tibetan orphans were opened in the Pestalozzi Children's Village, a Tibetan monastery was built in Rikon, various charities held nationwide collections to support Tibetan refugees, and over 150 Tibetan children were placed with Swiss families.⁵⁴

The Chinese diplomats viewed the Swiss support for Tibetan refugees as a gross interference in Chinese domestic affairs. In the early 1960s, China's foreign and domestic policy had been radicalized due to various border issues with neighbouring countries and the Great Leap Forward.⁵⁵ In addition, the 'national humiliation' discourse made it a foreign policy principle to avoid any situation that might allow foreign powers to exploit or dominate China. This was caused by the traumatic experience of foreign imperialism in China and the unequal treaties of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and had the effect that, in times of diplomatic crises or bilateral tensions, Chinese diplomats took on a rather bullying stance and showed a complete unwillingness to reach a compromise with foreign governments, because they had to avoid making China look weak at all costs.⁵⁶ The Chinese reaction to Tibetan refugees in Switzerland is a case in point.

Chinese diplomats constantly referred to Tibetan refugees in Switzerland as 'bandits', 'rebels' or 'traitors'. For the Chinese government and the Chinese diplomats in Switzerland, the Swiss government's support of Tibetan refugees was interpreted as official support of the Tibetans' 'anti-Chinese campaigns',

54 Weber, 'Aufnahme von politischen Flüchtlingen', 29 March 1963, dodis.ch/18992; Boss, 'Notizen über die Sitzung der schweizerischen Institutionen, die sich mit Hilfsaktionen für tibetische Flüchtlinge befassen', 17 July 1968, SEA-E2001E#1980/83#4250*. For Hungarian refugees in Switzerland see: Feldmann, 'Ungarische Flüchtlinge', 5 December 1956, dodis.ch/12322. See also David Tréfás, *Die Illusion, dass man sich kennt: Schweizerisch-ungarische Beziehungen zwischen 1945 und 1956* (Zürich: Chronos, 2008).

55 See Niu, Jun, '1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy,' *CWIHP Working Paper* 48 (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2005), pp. 6–11; Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 163.

56 See Zhang Shuguang, 'China's Strategic Culture and the Cold War Confrontations', in *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*, edited by Odd Arne Westad (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 259–267.

regardless of the Swiss humanitarian tradition or of the fact that the Swiss government prohibited the Tibetans from any kind of political involvement and refused to support officially nationwide charity collections.⁵⁷

While the issue of Tibetan refugees had brought tension to Sino-Swiss relations before 1966, the advent of the Cultural Revolution made them such a big issue that they almost caused a break in bilateral relations. This was fairly typical for the Cultural Revolution since, in 1966 and 1967, radicals were taking over the Foreign Ministry in Beijing and the Chinese diplomats abroad became ideological hardliners.⁵⁸ While Sino-Swiss relations did not suffer to the same extent as most other Chinese foreign relations,⁵⁹ the Federal Council's patience was not endless. When China accused the Swiss government of fostering anti-Chinese sentiment and demanded that the government stop the construction of the Tibetan monastery in Rikon, the Swiss officials replied with their usual arguments of humanitarianism and the charities being organized on a purely private level. Nevertheless, the Swiss government tried to convince the charities to tone down their language and advertisements for Tibetan collections, but it could not do anything to prevent the extremely critical portrayals of China's actions in Tibet that were typical in the Swiss press. As a result, time and time again, Swiss officials tried to explain to furious Chinese diplomats the concept of press freedom and their resulting inability to interfere with newspaper articles.⁶⁰

By July 1967, the Federal Council's patience had reached its limit. After yet another meeting with the Chinese Chargé d'affaires, François-Pierre Châtelain from the Political Department was exasperated about Chinese demands, seeing them as interference in Swiss domestic issues. He noted: 'We do not allow any

57 Bucher, 'Besuch von Herrn Lai,' 13 May 1960, dodis.ch/15293; Cuttat (New Delhi) to Dalai Lama (Upper Dharamsala), 16 January 1964, dodis.ch/30916; Keller (Beijing) to Micheli (Bern), 6 April 1964, dodis.ch/30913.

58 Ambassade (Tokio), 'Telegramm Nr. 103,' 17 August 1967, SEA E2001E#1978/84#2384*; Châtelain, 'Notiz,' 15 July 1967, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#53*; Zimmermann, 'Aktennotiz,' 22 December 1966, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#53*. See also Barbara Barnouin and Changgen Yu, *Chinese Foreign Policy during the Cultural Revolution* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998), pp. 8-12; Melvin Gurtov, 'The Foreign Ministry and Foreign Affairs,' in *The Cultural Revolution in China*, edited by Thomas W. Robinson (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 323-331.

59 Keller (Beijing) to EPD (Bern), 30 December 1966, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#53*. See also: Barnouin and Yu, *Chinese Foreign Policy*, pp. 46-47.

60 'Aktennotiz,' 21 October 1966, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#53*; Zimmermann, 'Aktennotiz,' 22 December 1966, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#53*; Press statement, 18 May 1967, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#54*.

government the right to demand anything from our federal authorities.’⁶¹ The last straw for the Federal Council was a Chinese note in August 1967, demanding that the Swiss government stop its support of ‘Tibetan bandits’ and to avoid any further provocations.⁶² The Political Department refused the note because of its rude tone but it was immediately published in the Chinese Embassy’s Bulletin of Information.⁶³ The long delay in communication between the Political Department in Bern and the Swiss Embassy in Beijing caused some problems which were exacerbated by further Chinese notes containing ultimatums. Eventually, however, Ambassador Oscar Rossetti managed to convince the furious officials in Bern to ignore further Chinese protests about Tibetan refugees in Switzerland, not least in an attempt to protect the Swiss Embassy in Beijing from any repercussions.⁶⁴ Although the Chinese continued to mention the issue every once in a while, they did so less threateningly and seemed to be resigned to the fact that it was something that both governments agreed to disagree about. It was certainly helpful that the Swiss government also tried to prevent any situation that could end up in a diplomatic *éclat*. For example, when the Dalai Lama was allowed to visit Switzerland in 1973, he was not allowed to make a public appearance.⁶⁵

4 Conclusion

Switzerland not only played a crucial role in Chinese foreign relations, but its neutrality and early recognition of the PRC allowed it to establish itself as a friendly power that stood out among most other Western European powers. Although Swiss interests in China were mainly based on economic interests, Sino-Swiss trade remained negligible until the 1970s. Instead, Sino-Swiss relations allowed both countries to reposition themselves in the changing international power constellations of the Cold War. During the formation of the Eastern and Western blocs, the opening of Sino-Swiss relations allowed Switzerland to establish itself as a neutral mediating power, which was helped by Chinese acquiescence and later even support of the Swiss participation in the

61 Châtelain, ‘Aktennotiz’, 25 July 1967, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#53*.

62 N-089-67, untitled, 5 August 1967, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#53*.

63 Telegramm 54 (Bern to Beijing), 10 August 1967, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#53*.

64 Rossetti (Beijing) to Micheli (Bern), ‘Tibet-Flüchtlinge’, 28 August 1967, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#54*.

65 Châtelain, ‘Notice’, 3 January 1968, SEA ; Telegramm 34 (Bern to Beijing), 2 June 1972, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#54*; Gelzer, ‘Première démarche chinoise dans l’affaire du Dalai Lama’, 30 August 1973, SEA E2200.174#1988/78#54*.

neutral power committees, the Korean War and the Geneva Conference. China, in turn, used its embassy and consulate in Switzerland to meet Western European politicians and businessmen to set up trade deals and discuss the potential establishment of future diplomatic relations. Switzerland was also a hub for Beijing's intelligence and subversion networks in Europe and its global propaganda networks. China's efforts in this respect became even more pronounced when the Sino-Soviet Split caused it to attempt to replace the Soviet Union as the leading communist power.

Switzerland's central location in Europe was, therefore, not only used by Chinese officials to meet diplomats and businessmen from neighbouring countries, but was also used by spies and informants. For many of them, the UN's European headquarters in Geneva were an ideal way of justifying travel to Geneva, where they could meet Chinese officials. Beijing's use of Switzerland as a hub for propaganda, however, seems to have had less to do with Switzerland's location in Europe than with the presence of the Chinese Embassy in Bern, which not only distributed propaganda material directly to interested parties but also assisted bookstores and organizations in obtaining additional propaganda material from China. There were also several communist activists in Switzerland who were either willing to print Chinese propaganda or smuggle it across the border.

While it is fairly easy to determine the singular role that Switzerland played in the establishment of Western European diplomatic and business relations with the PRC, it is much more difficult to determine how special Switzerland was for the Chinese intelligence and propaganda networks in Europe. It is clear that Switzerland played a considerable role in both types of networks, yet whether it figured as the nucleus of these networks or simply a hub cannot be determined until more archives declassify relevant files.

The issue of Tibetan refugees in Switzerland is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it shows how sensitive Beijing was to any perceived interference in its domestic issues. Most European countries (both from Eastern and Western Europe) experienced tensions in their bilateral relations with the PRC during the Cultural Revolution. However, secondly, it could be argued that Switzerland and Swiss diplomats still fared better than most other European nations during these turbulent years because of Switzerland's importance to China. While Beijing was fairly quick to organize demonstrations against other governments or even rupture relations after 1966, things did not progress this far with Switzerland, not only because Switzerland had traditionally not been counted as an imperial nation (as had, for example, Britain or France) but, more importantly, because it was too valuable for China as a hub for Beijing's various networks in Western Europe and as a location for diplomatic and

economic contacts with Western Europe. Thus, despite its small size, Switzerland was of great importance to China's presence in and relations with Western Europe in the Cold War.

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Greece and the People's Republic of China in the Cold War, 1972–1989

Dionysios Chourchoulis

1 Introduction

This chapter examines the development of Sino-Greek relations from 1972, when the governments of Greece and the People's Republic of China (PRC) established diplomatic relations, until 1989 when the Cold War ended and the Tian'anmen Square uprising took place. Since 2014–15, historians of international relations have paid considerable attention to the analysis of Sino-European relations during the Cold War period.¹ A primary goal of this essay is to integrate China into Greek historiography, and vice versa, as well as to integrate Sino-Greek relations into this new historiography on Sino-European relations.

The development of Sino-Greek relations in the 1970s and 1980s was shaped by changes in the structure of the international system and the Cold War,² but also by the emergence of additional political and/or security challenges for both China and Greece in the late 1960s. Thus, in parallel to the culmination of the Sino-Soviet crisis from 1969 onwards and the subsequent rapprochement between the United States and China,³ Greece (as many Western European states also did in the same period)⁴ established diplomatic relations with the

1 See, for instance, *Cold War History* 17, no. 2 (2017), Special Issue edited by Martin Albers and Chen Zhongzhong: 'Socialism, Capitalism and Sino-European Relations in the Deng Xiaoping Era, 1978–1992', and *Modern Asia Studies* 51, no. 1 (2017), Special issue edited by Angela Romano and Valeria Zanier: 'Circumventing the Cold War. The Parallel Diplomacy of Economic and Cultural Exchanges between Western Europe and Socialist China in the 1950s'.

2 See, for instance, Michael E. Latham, 'The Cold War in the Third World, 1963–1975', pp. 258–80, and Marc Trachtenberg, 'The structure of great power politics, 1963–1975', pp. 482–502, both in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. II: *Crises and Détente* edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

3 Yang Kuisong, 'The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969: From Zhenbao Island to Sino-American Rapprochement', *Cold War History* 1/1 (2000): pp. 21–52.

4 Martin Albers, *Britain, France, West Germany and the People's Republic of China, 1969–1982* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), especially pp. 45–59; Enrico Fardella, 'A significant periphery of the Cold War: Italy-China bilateral relations, 1949–1989', *Cold War History* 17/2 (2017): pp. 181–97.

PRC. Initially, political and security concerns – the will of both governments to break free from their diplomatic isolation and a mutual fear of the USSR – had been the driving force behind the establishment and development of Sino-Greek relations. Hopes for increased trade and economic ties also influenced Greece's Chinese policy, although Beijing was not particularly forthcoming and several factors were preventing the development of bilateral trade. China's paramount consideration remained the containment of the Soviet Union. Therefore, as this chapter aims to demonstrate, Beijing was particularly concerned with the post-1974 Greek-Turkish rift, which threatened to undermine the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) cohesion and military strength in South-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Thus, the Chinese were encouraging the normalization of Greek-Turkish relations, while adopting a policy of equidistance between Athens and Ankara. Furthermore, as the PRC supported the European Economic Community (EEC) project, the former also endorsed Greek inclusion into the latter.

Surprisingly, there is no Greek literature on the subject. As regards the historiography of Chinese foreign policy, Greece is, essentially, not mentioned at all. This chapter thus aims to provide a first brief, yet comprehensive, account of the Sino-Greek political, diplomatic and economic/trade relations during the period under examination. For this purpose, mainly Greek (and some UK) archival sources, the Greek press, and selected comments by international newspapers have been used. As no Chinese sources have been consulted, the chapter's analysis somewhat leans towards the Greek side. Hopefully, this chapter will provide a starting point for further research, especially when more Chinese and Greek (or other) archives are declassified.

2 The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, 1972–1974

The military dictatorship which ruled Greece from April 1967 to July 1974 was a staunch supporter of the United States and NATO and had pursued an anti-communist agenda, especially in internal affairs. However, in the realm of foreign policy the regime undertook some bold initiatives. Despite adopting a strongly anti-communist stance, Greece's relations with the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc did not deteriorate after 1967.⁵ On the contrary, the regime placed emphasis on improving Greece's relations with its Balkan neighbours, namely Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria, which reflected a sense of increasing

5 Sotiris Walden, *"Misassociated" Associates: Greek Dictatorship, Communist Regimes, and the Balkans, 1967–1974* [in Greek] (Athens: Polis Publications, 2009).

Greek isolation from its Western allies – especially the West Europeans.⁶ Then, in 1970–71, the junta decided to restore diplomatic relations with Albania, with which Athens {alternatively: Greece} had been in a state of war since the Italian attack on Greece in 1940.⁷ The Greek-Albanian rapprochement not only led to an unprecedented relaxation of the tension between the two neighbouring countries, but represented a real game changer in Greece's foreign relations. Albania had been a *de facto* ally of the People's Republic of China.⁸ When, by 1970–71, the latter had reluctantly initiated its rapprochement with the United States and the West,⁹ Athens began to consider a reappraisal of its Chinese policy.¹⁰ A corollary of the re-establishment of Greek-Albanian relations was that it facilitated the initiation of Sino-Greek talks (in Albanian territory).

At the same time, by 1969, the Sino-Soviet conflict had escalated. Military clashes erupted along the border, causing much apprehension to Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) leadership that an all-out Soviet attack was imminent. Mao, convinced that China's diplomatic isolation of the 1960s had become dangerous and counterproductive, decided that the Cultural Revolution excesses had to be somewhat suspended, and the conflict with the United States 'eased'.¹¹ As the PRC was seeking to reintegrate itself into international society, Beijing also normalized its relations with most West European states, on the condition that the latter would give up relations with Taiwan.¹² In this context, the Chinese were eager to establish diplomatic relations with Greece as well. There is evidence to suggest that the first secret

6 The National Archives (hereafter: TNA), Kew, London, UK. FCO 28/1256, W73/318/1, Hooper (Athens) to Douglas-Home (FCO), Letter on Greece and Albania, 18 November 1971.

7 Spyridon Sfetas, 'The Restoration of Greek-Albanian Diplomatic Relations (1970–1971)', in *Anoichtosini: Essays in Memory of Vassiliki Papoulia* [in Greek] (Thessaloniki: Vanias, 2012), pp. 555–73; Alexandros Nafpliotis, 'The 1971 Re-establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Greece and Albania: Cooperation and Strategic Partnership within Cold War Bipolarity?', in *Greece in the Balkans: Memory, Conflict and Exchange* edited by Othon Anastasakis et al. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 118–32.

8 On Sino-Albanian relations, see Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History* (London & New York: Tauris, 2001), pp. 185–86; Elez Biberaj, *Albania and China: a Study of an Unequal Alliance* (Boulder & London: Westview Press, 1986).

9 On the Sino-American rapprochement, see, for instance, Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 238–76.

10 It should be noted that Turkey had already established relations with Beijing since August 1971; however, archival sources do not indicate that this event had triggered a Greek response.

11 Odd Arne Westad, *Restless empire: China and the world since 1750* (Basic Books: New York, 2012), pp. 357–358, pp. 360–362, pp. 366–367.

12 Martin Albers, 'All Paths Leading to Beijing? Western Europe and Détente in East Asia, 1969–72', *The International History Review* 37/2 (2015): pp. 219–39.

exploratory contacts took place at the latest during the summer of 1971 in Bern and Paris.¹³ Then, on 25 October 1971, Athens sent a first clear signal to Beijing, by abstaining, rather than voting against Resolution 2758 at the United Nations (UN).¹⁴ The adoption of this Resolution led to the withdrawal of recognition of the Republic of China (ROC, modern Taiwan) in the UN, and to the recognition of the PRC Government as the only legitimate representative of China, which thus assumed China's seat, while the ROC lost its UN membership.¹⁵ The officials of the PRC had welcomed this Greek gesture and proved receptive and eager to respond.¹⁶

In November and December 1971, the two ambassadors accredited in Albania – Dionysios Karayiannis for Greece and Liu Zhenhua for the PRC – had undertaken the first tangible steps to pave the way for the normalization of Sino-Greek relations in Tirana.¹⁷ Progress had been slow, but Nixon's official visit to Beijing in February 1972 gave impetus to bilateral negotiations. The two parties reached an agreement on 24 May 1972 to establish diplomatic relations based on the observance of their independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers, equality of rights, non-interference in the internal affairs of each other, and mutual interests. On 5 June 1972, they issued a joint communique, which affirmed that the Greek government recognized the government of the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China and 'took note' of Beijing's declaration of Taiwan being an inalienable part of the territory of the PRC. Therefore, the Greek government adhered to the principle of the 'one-China' policy, which constituted the pillar of the PRC's foreign relations: that the Beijing government alone represented China, and that Taiwan was part of Socialist China. Greece also ceased to use the term 'Republic of China' or

13 Historical and Diplomatic Archive of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, Greece [Diplomatiko kai Istoriko Archeio tou Ypourgείου ton Exoterikon – hereafter: DIA YE], Central Department Series, File 2/2_1971, Embassy in Bern to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter: M FA), no. Π.4013-1876, Letter on contact of representative of the PRC with the Press Secretary of the Greek Embassy in Bern, 24 August 1971; DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 2/2_1971, Markopouliotis (Paris Embassy) to M FA, no. 534/E/14, 18 June 1971.

14 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 2/2_1972, M FA (4th Directorate) to Greek Embassies and Permanent Delegations, no. ΔΓ-112-177, 1 November 1971.

15 John W. Garver, *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 304–5.

16 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 2/2_1971, Karayiannis (Tirana Embassy) to M FA, no. 150/E/7, 8 December 1971.

17 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/2_1972, Letter of Karayiannis (Tirana Embassy) to Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Xanthopoulos-Palamas, no. 37, 3 November 1971; DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/2_1972, Letter of Karayiannis (Tirana Embassy) to M FA, no. 147, Letter on 'Recognition of the PRC', 7 December 1971.

'Nationalist China'. In addition, the agreement provided for the exchange of ambassadors within six months.¹⁸ Moreover, the Taiwanese diplomatic legation had to leave Greek territory within three months, and Greece would terminate its 'official' relations with the Guomindang regime (these did not include trade and cultural ties, though, which continued to exist).¹⁹

What were the main motives of the two parties behind their decision to establish diplomatic relations? Until 1974, post-war Greece generally followed the US lead and initiatives with the exceptions of the Middle East dispute and, obviously, the Cyprus issue.²⁰ The advent of the military regime had not brought any significant change in Greece's Cold War policy posture. An important factor however was that Greece shared a common adversary with the PRC: the Soviet Union. By the early 1970s, the latter had become Beijing's principal geopolitical enemy.²¹ Not surprisingly, the Soviets perceived the Greek decision to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC in the early summer of 1972 as an anti-Soviet manoeuvre, despite the efforts of the Greek embassy in Moscow to reassure the Soviets that the Greek government did not intend to provoke the USSR by recognizing the PRC.²² A further reason motivating the rapprochement with Beijing was that the Greek Foreign Ministry hoped that an opening to China might alleviate Greece's diplomatic isolation.²³ Another incentive was the hope that several sections of the Greek economy (such as the shipping firms, the construction and mining companies, the shipbuilding industry, and perhaps agriculture) might benefit from the development of bilateral economic and trade relations.²⁴ Furthermore, the Deputy Minister of

18 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/2_1972, Note on Agreement between Greece and the PRC on recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations, 15 November 1972.

19 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/2_1972, Letter of Karayiannis (Tirana Embassy) to Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Xanthopoulos-Palamas, no. Φ.2341.421/1/1/ΑΣ24, 2 February 1972.

20 For an overview of US-Greek relations from the aftermath of the Greek Civil War to the downfall of the junta, see James Edward Miller, *The United States and the Making of Modern Greece: History and Power, 1950–1974* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

21 Chi-Kwan Mark, *China and the World since 1945. An International History* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 72–78.

22 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/3_1972, Vlachos (Moscow Embassy) to MFA, no. 465, 14 March 1972; DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 4/2_1973, Rokanas (Rome Embassy) to MFA, no. Φ. 4263.81/ΑΣ 1184, 29 June 1973.

23 Christos Xanthopoulos-Palamas, *Diplomatic Triptych* [in Greek] (Athens: Oi Ekdoseis ton Filon, 1979), pp. 219–24.

24 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/3_1972, Pop (Bern Embassy) to Prime Minister Georgios Papadopoulos, 3 July 1972; DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/3_1972, Ministry of National Economy to MFA, no. ΕΜΠ.246/59, Note on the prospects of the development of trade with the PRC, 11 February 1972.

Foreign Affairs, Christos Xanthopoulos-Palamas, stressed the need for a timely and accurate assessment of the future course of US-Chinese relations, as well as of the triangular relations between the United States, the Soviet Union and China.²⁵ Xanthopoulos-Palamas was a prominent Greek diplomat who was then responsible for much of the course of Greece's foreign policy as well as the day-to-day direction of the MFA.²⁶ He believed that the PRC had already been 'a first class element' in global politics, 'equivalent with the two super-powers' and a very important factor for the overall balance of the international system. He even expressed the view that in the not so distant future (by the late 1980s), the PRC could possibly outshine the superpowers.²⁷ Essentially, Greece could hardly ignore the Chinese colossus, which had become not only a member of the UN General Assembly, but also of the UN Security Council.²⁸

For their part, the Chinese leaders felt that they already had important interests in South-eastern Europe (especially in Romania, and by 1969–70, Yugoslavia).²⁹ In addition, at least by the early 1970s, the Chinese had become greatly concerned over the increase of Soviet military and naval presence in the Mediterranean and expressed their interest in the maintenance of the cohesion and strength of NATO's South-eastern region.³⁰ They were also particularly keen to take advantage of the huge merchant fleet of the Greek ship owners to further develop Chinese seaborne trade around the world. Conversely, Greek ship owners, a powerful and influential lobby, had already defied previous bans of the Greek government on trade with the PRC and had been cultivating brisk business with the Chinese.³¹ According to some estimates, by 1971, out of about 300 ships of several nations that were handling Chinese cargoes,

25 DIAYE, Tokyo Embassy Series, File 2/3_1979, MFA (Third Directorate) to various Greek Embassies, no 4441.53/1.6/ΑΣ446, 2 March 1972.

26 From July 1970 to October 1973, Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos, the Prime Minister and strongman of the junta, also held the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. But as he lacked any relevant expertise, Xanthopoulos-Palamas was the key figure until he resigned in September 1972.

27 Xanthopoulos-Palamas, *Diplomatic Triptych*, p. 286.

28 DIAYE, Central Department Series, File 1/3_1972, Vlachos (Moscow Embassy) to MFA, no. 465, 14 March 1972.

29 Mircea Munteanu, 'Communications Breakdown? Romania and the Sino-American Rapprochement', *Diplomatic History* 33/4 (2009): 615–31; Ross Johnson, 'Yugoslavia and the Sino-Soviet Conflict: The Shifting Triangle, 1948–1974', *Studies in Comparative Communism* 7/1–2 (1974): pp. 184–203.

30 DIAYE, Tokyo Embassy Series, File 2/3_1979, Chrysanthopoulos (Tokyo Embassy) to MFA, no 2480/Φ2341.22/Β8-4, 2 November 1972; DIAYE, Central Department Series, File 4/2_1973, Note by Deputy Foreign Minister Faidon Anninos-Kavallieratos on his conversation with Chinese Undersecretary of State Qiao Guanhua, 5 October 1973.

31 DIAYE, Central Department Series, File 1/2_1972, Letter of Karayiannis (Tirana Embassy) to Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Xanthopoulos-Palamas, no. 37, 3 November 1971.

approximately twenty-two per cent were Greek.³² In addition, the two regimes held similar views with regard to the situation in the Middle East, having adopted a pro-Arab and anti-Israeli position.³³ In other words, their motives for the rapprochement reflected their unequal status: for the PRC it was a helpful gesture in the context of its expanding geopolitical ambitions; for Greece it was imperative to adjust to the prevailing trends in international affairs and to the shifts in the global balance of power which a small state could not ignore.

The first Chinese diplomats who would staff the new embassy arrived in Athens in November 1972, followed by the ambassador himself a few months later.³⁴ On the contrary, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs procrastinated. It is not clear whether its hesitation emanated from fears of provoking the reaction of the Soviet Union, of Greek unwillingness to terminate relations with Taiwan, or from second thoughts on the potential danger of the rise of Chinese influence in Greece.³⁵ It seems more probable that it simply took more time for the Greek bureaucracy to organize the establishment of the Beijing embassy. The Greek ambassador Nikos Katapodis arrived in Beijing in early April 1973. In his memoirs, he admitted that he did not have any knowledge of the PRC or of the Chinese people, culture and history.³⁶ Indeed, there existed no Greek Sinologists or even experts with moderate knowledge of Chinese affairs. This constituted an impediment for the substantial development of bilateral political, economic, trade and even cultural relations.

The normalization of bilateral relations was sealed in late May 1973, when Colonel Nikolaos Makarezos, the Greek deputy premier, who ranked third in the regime's hierarchy and was in charge of economic affairs, paid a six-day state visit to the PRC (the first ever to China by a Greek government official).

32 'Athens and Peking Establish Relations; Taiwan Aide to Go', *The New York Times*, 6 June 1972.

33 China had openly supported the 'progressive' Arab states in general and the Palestinian cause in particular (especially after the foundation of the PLO in 1964). See Lorenz M. Lüthi and Chen Jian, 'China's Turn to the World', in Lorenz Lüthi, ed., *The Regional Cold Wars in Europe, East Asia and the Middle East: Crucial Periods and Turning Points* (Washington D.C. & Stanford, CA: Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Stanford University Press, 2015), pp. 146–69.

34 DIAVE, Central Department Series, File 1/2_1972, Karayiannis' note on the arrival of Chinese diplomats in Athens, 8 November 1972.

35 DIAVE, Central Department Series, File 4/2, KYII [Greek Central Intelligence Agency] to MEA, no. Ε-217542, 17 May 1973. This KYII letter had reproduced a telegram sent on 25 January 1973 by the Greek Consulate General in Hong Kong, before the establishment of the Greek Embassy in Beijing and the arrival of ambassador Katapodis there in April 1973.

36 Nikos Katapodis, *Scattered papers of my diplomatic life* [in Greek] (Athens: Potamos, 2004), p. 56.

The fact that it was the head of economic affairs that visited Beijing is also telling about the Greek aims and motives regarding bilateral relations. He declared that 'Greece does not intend [...] to underestimate the impact the People's Republic of China has on the revised system of political balances'.³⁷ Makarezos met with his counterpart, Vice-Premier Li Xiannian, and with Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. The two parties signed the first trade, shipping and air transport agreements, but dialogue between the Greek and the Chinese delegations on more specific trade and economic matters was mainly of an exploratory nature. The Chinese had been reluctant to commit themselves to deeper economic cooperation, such as the establishment of joint ventures, the inauguration of regular shipping lines connecting Greece and the PRC, and the foundation of a freight office in the biggest Greek port, Piraeus (near Athens).³⁸

Makarezos and Li Xiannian also exchanged views on various issues of international politics, including the situation in Cyprus,³⁹ Greece's relations with Turkey and its Socialist Balkan neighbours, the threat posed by the rise of Soviet military and maritime presence in the eastern Mediterranean, Sino-Indian relations, and other matters. Besides, the two parties held identical views with regard to the situation in the Middle East. The Chinese vice-premier placed emphasis on recent developments there. He maintained that the United States and the Soviet Union were satisfied with the 'no war, no peace' situation, had essentially accepted the post-1967 status quo and were not considering the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a priority. Furthermore, although traditionally the PRC had 'unreservedly' supported the Palestinian cause, the Chinese leaders expressed their disapproval of airplane hijackings. The Greek government also condemned this form of Palestinian armed struggle.⁴⁰

3 The Development of Sino-Greek Relations, 1974–1981

The main cause of the fall of the Greek junta was its policy in Cyprus and its failure to deter Turkish aggression. The Turkish invasion of the island on 20 July 1974 led to the collapse of the junta some days later and to the restoration of democracy, while a rapid deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations ensued. Meanwhile, US and NATO inaction during the second Turkish invasion in mid-

37 'A Greek Official Leaves On 6-Day Trip to Peking', *The New York Times*, 20 May 1973.

38 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/2_1973, Katapodis (Beijing Embassy) to MFA, no. 2341.93/20/AΣ141, Letter: 'Review of Makarezos visit', 23 May 1973.

39 Negotiations for a settlement between the two communities had stagnated.

40 DIA YE, Central Department Series, File 1/2_1973, Katapodis (Beijing Embassy) to MFA, no. 2341.93/25/AΣ163, Brief minute of Makarezos' talks, 4 June 1973.

August caused a significant readjustment of Greece's national security and foreign policy.⁴¹ The 'national unity' government, formed by conservative and centrist politicians and led by Konstantinos Karamanlis, withdrew in protest from the NATO military command (14 August 1974).⁴² Then, in the aftermath of Karamanlis' electoral victory of November 1974, his pro-West conservative government started to pursue a 'multidimensional' foreign policy in an effort to enhance the country's international position and counterbalance Turkey. Greek policy makers did not aim to detach the country from the West, opting instead to integrate into the other Western sub-system, that of the EEC; however, Athens also effected a rather delayed adjustment of its foreign policy to the demands of détente, developing relations with the Eastern European states and, eventually, the Soviet Union itself.⁴³

These adjustments also entailed Greece's cautious search for better relations with China, even before the death of Mao and the subsequent removal of the Gang of Four from power in 1976. Emphasis was placed on expanding Sino-Greek cultural relations and scientific cooperation, although the development of bilateral trade proved to be a significant challenge.⁴⁴ For their part, during their contacts with Greek policy makers in 1975–1977, Chinese officials, such as diplomats and high ranking officers of the Chinese armed forces, adopted an anti-Soviet attitude and expressed their interest in the overall NATO - Warsaw Pact correlation of forces and in Greek defence capabilities against the communist Balkan states. They were also concerned with the situation in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East and the threat posed by endemic instability and Soviet presence and influence there.⁴⁵

41 Dionysios Chourchoulis, 'Greece, Cyprus and Albania', in Hugo Meijer and Marco Wyss, eds., *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 313–29.

42 Dionysios Chourchoulis and Lykourgos Kourkouvelas, 'Greek perceptions of NATO during the Cold War', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 12/4 (2012): pp. 497–514.

43 See, for instance, Eirini Karamouzi, 'Managing the "Helsinki Spirit" in the Balkans: The Greek Initiative for Balkan Co-operation, 1975–1976', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 24/4 (2013): pp. 597–618; Lykourgos Kourkouvelas, 'Détente as a Strategy: Greece and the Communist World, 1974–9', *The International History Review* 35/5 (2013): pp. 1052–67.

44 Konstantinos Karamanlis Foundation, Filothei, Greece (hereafter: ΚΚΦ), Konstantinos Karamanlis Archives (hereafter: ΚΚΑ), ΜΕΑ's memorandum on Greek foreign policy with regard to the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the communist Asian states, August–December 1977.

45 ΚΚΦ, Evangelos Averoff Archives (hereafter: ΕΑΑ) File 27/15, Averoff to ΜΕΑ: Memo of conversation between Defense Minister Averoff and the Chinese Ambassador He Yang, 18 October 1975; ΚΚΦ, ΕΑΑ File 30/15, Memo of conversation between Defense Minister Averoff and the Deputy Chief of the PΛΑ General Hou Chuan, 1 July 1977.

The Chinese government maintained a policy of 'equal distance' towards Greece and Turkey. In particular, when Greek-Turkish relations deteriorated sharply after the summer of 1974, the Chinese were greatly concerned over the possibility of the dissolution of NATO's Southern Flank. For instance, in autumn 1974, the then deputy premier Deng Xiaoping, when heading the Chinese delegation to the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly, encouraged Turkish officials to solve any problems between their country and Greece. This way, the 'big fishermen' (that is the two superpowers, but in essence mainly the USSR) would not benefit from the conflict between the 'fishes'.⁴⁶ With regard to the Cyprus problem and Greek-Turkish tensions, the PRC had opted for strict and absolute neutrality (the Greek embassy in Beijing characterized this as a 'policy of absence'). A Greek-Turkish armed conflict had to be avoided at any cost.⁴⁷ The Chinese had adopted the position that the Cyprus problem was a 'regional issue' that should be solved peacefully through Greek-Turkish and/or Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot negotiations, and avoided condemning the 1974 Turkish invasion and the subsequent *de facto* partition of the island. In addition, Greece and Turkey were both considered as friendly, anti-Soviet states belonging to the Western bloc, the cohesion of which should be maintained in order to contain Moscow's 'aggression' around the globe.⁴⁸ Both in international fora (especially the United Nations) and during talks with Greek (and Turkish) officials, Chinese leaders and diplomats consistently avoided taking sides with regard to the Cyprus problem or the Greek-Turkish dispute on delineation of the continental shelf at the Aegean Sea. They generally expressed their sympathy to their Greek counterparts, showed understanding, explained that the PRC was itself involved in similar bilateral disputes with Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and the Philippines, and called for a peaceful settlement through bilateral negotiations.⁴⁹

However, existing archival sources and (scant) relevant literature indicate that despite this official policy of 'equal distance' between Greece and Turkey (and the Republic of Cyprus), the PRC primarily valued Turkey as a bulwark

46 Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, MA & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 87.

47 DIAYE, London Embassy Series, File 4/3_1977, MFA to Embassies in Washington, London, Paris, Moscow and Greek Permanent Delegation in NATO, no. 1211/149/AS 4625, Letter of Beijing Embassy on Chinese foreign policy, 12 October 1976.

48 DIAYE, Tokyo Embassy Series, File 3/2 [Section 2], Chrysanthopoulos (Beijing Embassy) to MFA, no 524/Φ. 1210.45/Δ 44, 24 March 1981.

49 See, for instance, KKF, KKA File 52B, Minutes of meeting between Prime Minister Karamanlis and Vice President Deng Xiaoping, 13 November 1979.

against Soviet 'expansionism'.⁵⁰ For this reason, in 1977, Chinese diplomats were urging Turkish officials and prominent journalists to make sure that Turkey remained a faithful ally of the United States, despite Turkish anger and disappointment over the US decision to hold up military aid because of the 1974 invasion of Cyprus. These Chinese officials (including the ambassador and the military attaché in Ankara) were seeking to convey the message that the real enemy was Moscow and that Turkey should remain a committed NATO member and should shore up US-Turkish relations. The Chinese political and military leadership considered that, if Turkey severed its relations with the United States and the West and adopted a neutralist policy, this would permit the redeployment of significant Soviet forces from the Soviet-Turkish border in the Caucasus to East Asia and the Sino-Soviet border.⁵¹ This also meant that Greek policy makers and the public opinion had realized that Greece could not count on China applying any pressure on Turkey to show restraint in the Aegean Sea and moderate its demands on Cyprus. During their talks with Balkan leaders and officials, the Chinese repeatedly reiterated Zhou Enlai's favourite quote, that 'distant waters do not quell fires', meaning that China, because of its distance and the lack of power projection capabilities, would not be in a position – even if it should wish to do so – to act as a protector or mediator in South-eastern Europe or the eastern Mediterranean.⁵² Therefore, there were certain limits on what Athens could expect, at the political and diplomatic level, even by a significant development of Sino-Greek ties.

However, both the PRC and Greece sought to develop their relations after the mid-1970s. This process was perhaps facilitated by the establishment of diplomatic relations between the EEC and China since 1975 and the negotiations for the conclusion of an EEC-PRC trade agreement (which was eventually signed in April 1978).⁵³ International security concerns (i.e. the Soviet threat) was another factor that had influenced the development of Sino-Greek relations. Thus, in early July 1977, the deputy chief of the PIA Ground Forces, General

50 Since 1973, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai had already stressed that Turkey (as well as Iran and Pakistan) was one of the most important US partners to contain the Soviet Union and were urging for the improvement of US-Turkish relations. See, for instance, Michael Yahuda, *Towards the End of Isolationism: China's Foreign Policy After Mao* (London & Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1983), p. 173.

51 Nicholas Gage, 'Turks Feel Pressure to Keep Role in NATO', *The New York Times*, 25 December 1977.

52 Quoted in David A. Andelman, 'China's Balkan Strategy', *International Security* 4/3 (1979–1980): pp. 60–79.

53 Marie Julie Chenard, 'Seeking Détente and Driving Integration: The European Community's opening towards the People's Republic of China, 1975–1978', *Journal of European Integration History* 18/1 (2012): pp. 25–38.

Hou Chuan, visited Greece. He held talks with the Greek Defence Minister Evangelos Averoff on the international situation, with emphasis on the military balance of forces between NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Europe.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, by 1978, the post-Mao Chinese leadership had decided that China should pursue a more active foreign policy and engage with the outside world.⁵⁵ Within that context, Beijing began to develop – for the first time – a coherent and proactive Balkan strategy. The region had become an important element in a broad diplomatic offensive which aimed to enhance China's 'visibility' on the international scene, and most importantly, to establish a regional foothold in its effort to irritate and contain, or even encircle, the Soviet Union. Thus, Beijing focused on developing its relations mainly with non-aligned Yugoslavia, as well as Romania (the latter remained the least dependent Warsaw Pact member). On the contrary, on 7 July 1978, the PRC abruptly terminated its alliance with Albania. However, the PRC also made 'openings' to Greece and Turkey (as well as to Iran, which was then still pro-Western).⁵⁶

It was in this context that the Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua paid an official visit to Greece in late September 1978 and held discussions with Prime Minister Karamanlis and other officials. Both sides sought to find ways to strengthen bilateral ties in the fields of trade, maritime commerce, agriculture, and culture. Huang Hua expressed his support for the Greek effort to join the EEC and declared that, 'a united and powerful Europe is vitally important to the maintenance of world peace and European security'.⁵⁷ It is also noteworthy that the two countries reached a bilateral cultural agreement (the first between the PRC and a European country since the Cultural Revolution). This, among other things, provided for the staging near the Acropolis of a series of performances by the Peking Opera.⁵⁸

While Minister of Commerce Georgios Panayiotopoulos flew to China in April 1978, Karamanlis himself visited Beijing in November 1979. This was the first official visit of a Greek prime minister to China. He held talks with his counterpart, Hua Guofeng, as well as the 'paramount [most prominent] leader',

54 KKF, EAA File 30/15, Memo of conversation between Defence Minister Averoff and the Deputy Chief of the PIA General Hou Chuan, 1 July 1977.

55 John W. Garver, *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 349, p. 355, p. 359.

56 Andelman, 'China's Balkan Strategy', pp. 64–65, p. 70.

57 Mario Modiano, 'Mr Huang calls for united Europe during Greek visit', *The Times*, 22 September 1978. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been aware of Beijing's support towards the EEC project at least since 1973. See DIAYE, Tokyo Embassy Series, File 2/3_1979, Chryssanthopoulos (Tokyo Embassy) to MFA, no 253/Φ2344.141/B8-5, 26 January 1973.

58 'Peking Opera to perform at Acropolis', *The Times*, 23 September 1978.

Deng Xiaoping. These discussions confirmed that bilateral relations were friendly and that the two states had reached a mutual understanding on a series of political issues around the globe: for instance, that the United Nations had been unable to solve bilateral and regional disputes and should therefore be given additional power to exercise more control over events through sanctions and other means of pressure; that the integration of Western Europe should proceed and that the balance of military power across Europe should be restored; that Soviet 'imperialism' and infiltration caused concern and was a major factor of destabilization; and that a compromise peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict should be reached.⁵⁹

However, opportunities for further political and/or economic cooperation did not actually arise. The Chinese government reiterated that it considered both Greece and Turkey as countries friendly to the PRC and officially declared that they wished to maintain their neutral stance on the Cyprus issue and the Greek-Turkish feud. Also, while the Greek delegation reluctantly put forward the prospects for a potential development of bilateral economic and trade relations in various fields,⁶⁰ the Chinese were not forthcoming. As Deng maintained, 'for the time being' Chinese external trade could not develop substantially, because the PRC was undergoing a 'transitory period'.⁶¹ In fact, China needed and was seeking international loans (especially from Japan) and the large-scale import of cutting-edge Western technology – including arms – to facilitate the modernization of the country.⁶² Greece was unable to provide either funds or advanced technological goods.

The most valuable available archival source, which provides an in-depth and reliable analysis of the status and trends of Sino-Greek relations after 1974, is a report prepared by the Greek embassy in Beijing in October 1980. The outgoing ambassador Themistocles Chryssanthopoulos (a very experienced diplomat and former ambassador in Tokyo, therefore one of the very few Greek experts on East Asia), provided a full picture of bilateral trade. During the late 1970s, trade had been of little importance. The main trading goods had been

59 KKF, KKA File 52B, Minutes of meetings between Prime Minister Karamanlis and Vice President Deng Xiaoping, 13–14 November 1979; KKF, KKA File 52B, Minutes of meeting between Prime Minister Karamanlis and Prime Minister Hua Guofeng, 15 November 1979.

60 Emphasis was placed on the potential Greek exports of tobacco, the construction of Chinese ships in Greek shipyards, the engagement of Greek construction companies at the Chinese infrastructure projects, the export of Chinese oil to Greece.

61 KKF, KKA File 52B, Minutes of meetings between Prime Minister Karamanlis and Vice President Deng Xiaoping, 13–14 November 1979.

62 Martin Albers, 'Partners but not Allies: West European Co-operation with China, 1978–1982', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 25/4 (2014): pp. 688–707.

wire cables, sheet iron and pipes, chemical fertilizers, cotton, and olive oil. The Greek embassy's assessment on the prospects of bilateral trade was rather pessimistic. Greece was a small country with a relatively poor population, and therefore constituted a negligible market for Chinese exports. Conversely, the amount and quantity of available Greek products was insignificant and could not meet the rapidly increasing Chinese needs. Geographic distance did not favour the development of bilateral trade either. In addition, China was itself a tobacco-producing country, so Greece could not sell the PRC its main export product. In several cases Greek exporters had not expressed any tangible interest in entering the Chinese market. It is also noteworthy that Sino-Greek cooperation on maritime commerce had not developed as much as one might expect, given the mutual interest and the statements made by both parties since 1972–1973. Although Greek ship-owners had been heavily engaged in Chinese maritime commerce, Greek proposals for the establishment of a joint Sino-Greek maritime agency in the port of Piraeus and for the provision of Chinese crews to man Greek merchant ships had failed to materialize. The embassy noted, though, that Greek ship-owners might contemplate building ships at Chinese shipyards, at low cost.⁶³

In his report, the ambassador also claimed that Greece had to take steps to educate some individuals as Sinologists, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (and, in fact, the other state agencies and institutions) did not employ any China experts. The other Balkan countries, by contrast, did have sinologists at their disposal. Finally, the embassy in Beijing remained understaffed. Not only was there no China expert, but even the posts of commercial attaché, typist and personal assistant/secretary to the ambassador had remained vacant.⁶⁴

With regard to China's national and international stature and prospects, Chrysanthopoulos reached the conclusion that the Chinese economic recovery would be slow, that there was no such thing as a Chinese economic 'miracle', and that Western expectations that China constituted a land of opportunity had been grossly exaggerated. This assessment contradicted the estimate made by Xanthopoulos-Palamas just a few years earlier that China might catch up with the superpowers by the mid-1980s. In case of a NATO-Warsaw Pact general war, Chrysanthopoulos assessed that the PRC would seek to

63 DIA YE, Tokyo Embassy Series, File 3/2 [Section 2], Chrysanthopoulos (Beijing Embassy) to MFA, no 3028/Φ. 32/A 14, 20 October 1980.

64 Ibid. At least until 1986 the Greek MFA had not appointed a commercial attaché in the Beijing Embassy.

refrain from participating in the conflict. He also considered that a Sino-Soviet rapprochement was not improbable in the near future.⁶⁵

Overall, relations between Greece and the PRC remained friendly until the early 1980s, although the Greek government would not go so far as to let its contacts with the PRC disturb the recent improvement in Greek-Soviet relations. Even so, apparently the conservative Karamanlis administration was, in principle, more eager to develop bilateral cooperation than Andreas Papandreou's first socialist governments of 1981–85.

4 Bilateral Relations during the 1980s

The Greek Socialist Party (PASOK), under the leadership of Andreas Papandreou, had become the main opposition party after the elections of November 1977. In foreign policy, PASOK first stood for non-alignment based on hostility to Turkey, distrust of the United States, rejection of Greece's integration in the West, support for Mediterranean socialist groupings and for closer links with the Arab world and with Greece's northern neighbours in the Balkans.⁶⁶ Since 1977, Papandreou had moderated his rhetoric on foreign policy. He nevertheless still promised to pull Greece out of NATO, to close down US bases on Greek soil, to remove US nuclear warheads from Greek territory and to hold a referendum regarding Greece's participation in the EEC (Greece officially joined the organization in January 1981).⁶⁷

However, Papandreou, who won a landslide electoral victory in October 1981, eventually kept Greece in both NATO and the EEC. But he also proved willing to improve relations with the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc even further. During his first tenure, he also sought to develop relations with several Third World countries (including some 'radical' Arab states and India), rather than with the PRC.⁶⁸ Furthermore, by the late 1970s, the PRC had adopted a strong anti-Soviet policy by urging the Americans to abandon détente and, soon afterwards, by cooperating with the United States to thwart Soviet incursions into the Third World. In effect, an informal anti-Soviet Sino-American strategic

65 Ibid.

66 Constantine Melakopides, 'The logic of Papandreou's foreign policy', *International Journal* 42/3 (1987): 559–84; Van Coufoudakis, 'Greek Foreign Policy Since 1974: Quest for Independence', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 6/1 (1988): pp. 55–78.

67 David Tonge, 'Papandreou Sheds his Revolutionary Image', *The Financial Times*, 30 July 1980; 'Papandreou's heel', *The Economist*, 18 July 1981.

68 Melakopides, 'The Logic', 572; Theodore A. Couloumbis, 'PASOK's Foreign Policies, 1981–89: Continuity or Change?', in Richard Clogg, ed., *Greece 1981–89: The Populist Decade* (Basingstoke & London: The Macmillan Press, 1993), pp. 113–30.

partnership was soon formed.⁶⁹ This Chinese attitude may also have played a role in the formulation of Papandreou's policy towards China during his first tenure as prime minister (October 1981–June 1985).

Papandreou clearly valued relations with Moscow, and with the Soviet bloc in general, far more highly than those with Beijing. Several factors accounted for this. Preserving détente and breaking free – as far as was possible – from the imperatives of bipolar confrontation had been one of Andreas Papandreou and his associates' priorities.⁷⁰ From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, some Greeks (including the Greek Communist Party – the KKE – but also other Leftist groups) considered the PRC to be an 'aggressive' power, even willing to consider a Third (nuclear) World War.⁷¹ Although we do not know much about PASOK's views with regard to the PRC until 1986, it appears that Papandreou did not wish to dissatisfy the Greek Communists and other Leftists, especially as his previous promises to leave the EEC and NATO and to close down the US military bases did not materialize.⁷² Furthermore, while Greece and the Soviet Union had concluded several important economic and trade agreements during the late 1970s and early 1980s,⁷³ Greece and China had failed to broker any significant business deal after 1972. As has already been mentioned, several factors accounted for the relative lack of progress in the development of Sino-Greek economic and trade relations during the 1970s and early 1980s: the distance between the two countries, the lack of regular maritime connections between the two countries, the low competitiveness of most Greek products, and the rapid growth of Chinese agricultural production that prevented the export of Greek agricultural products to the Chinese market.⁷⁴ Even so, bilateral trade did actually increase, albeit modestly, after 1980.⁷⁵

69 Westad, *Restless Empire*, pp. 373–77; Garver, *China's Quest*, pp. 408–19, pp. 426–27.

70 TNA, FCO 9/4657, WSG 021/1, Athens to FCO, Note on Papandreou's foreign policy, 26 November 1984.

71 See, for instance, the leftist periodical *Prosanatolismoi*, vol. 39, January 1976. For many years, the Chinese leaders were asserting that the outbreak of a global nuclear war would be inevitable.

72 TNA, FCO 9/4638, WSG 011/1, Athens to FCO, 13 December 1984; TNA, FCO 9/4652, WSG 020/8, Athens to FCO, Note on Greek-Soviet relations, 24 September 1984.

73 KKF, KKA File 54A, Documents on cooperation of Syros shipyards with the Soviet Navy and Sudoimport corporation, 2–30 November 1979; KKF, KKA File 68B, Letter of Haferkamp (vice president of the Commission) to Dimadis (Permanent Representative of Greece in the EEC) on Greek-Soviet agreement on economic, industrial, scientific and technological cooperation, 14 March 1983.

74 *TO VIMA* [Greek mainstream weekly newspaper], 6 April 1986.

75 *TO VIMA*, 6 April 1986. From 1980 to 1985, Greek imports from the PRC amounted to more than \$ 20 million per annum. Greek exports had gradually increased from about \$ 2.4 million to \$ 12 million, and in 1984–1985, they exceeded the value of imports. Even if these

Conversely, the Chinese leadership had always been reserved towards the West European socialist parties, which were the most ardent supporters of détente between the superpowers, especially as left-wing parties had achieved electoral victories in several West European states during the early 1980s (as was the case in Greece).⁷⁶ Although little archival material is available for the period after 1980–81 regarding Sino-Greek relations, it is safe to assume that the Chinese may have become concerned with the anti-American rhetoric and some acts of defiance by the new socialist Greek leader, as well as his lack of criticism towards the USSR. Some of his other initiatives, such as the endorsement of nuclear disarmament and his support for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, would not have elicited support from the PRC's leadership either. Until the mid-1980s, when the perceived Soviet threat receded, the Chinese did not favour arms control agreements as a means of containing Soviet military growth. It is also obvious that Papandreou's ambivalent (at least in terms of his rhetoric) position regarding Greece's membership in NATO and the EEC – two institutions that the PRC considered crucial as a means of Western pressure on and containment of the Soviet Union – would have found little approval in Beijing.

Even under those circumstances, as Cold War tensions slowly began to ease, and after his re-election in June 1985 when Papandreou opted for a more 'realistic' approach to foreign affairs,⁷⁷ contacts between the Greek and the Chinese leadership resumed. Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou paid an official visit to China in April 1986 and met his counterpart Zhao Ziyang as well as Deng Xiaoping. At the political-diplomatic level, this was to some extent an attempt to counterbalance the development of Sino-Turkish relations,⁷⁸ which had flourished during the previous four years.⁷⁹ Papandreou wished to explain the country's positions and policy with regard to the delineation of the continental

numbers are not entirely accurate, they certainly indicate the development of, and trends in Sino-Greek trade relations.

76 See, for instance, Enrico Fardella, Christian Ostermann, Charles Kraus, eds., *Sino-European Relations during the Cold War and the Rise of a Multipolar World: a Critical Oral History*, e-text (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2015), pp. 108–9, <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/sino-european-relations-during-the-cold-war-and-the-rise-multipolar-world>>; Albers, 'Partners but not Allies', 694–95; Garver, *China's Quest*, pp. 341–42.

77 Henry Kamm, 'Papandreou Hopes for Better Ties With the U.S. in His Second Term', *The New York Times*, 6 June 1985; Philip Revzin, 'Greek Leader, Facing Economic Worries, Modifies His Vitriolic Anti-U.S. Rhetoric', *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 January 1986.

78 *TO VIMA*, 6 April 1986.

79 On the development of Sino-Turkish relations and the increase in high-level mutual visits in 1981–1986, see Selcuk Colakoglu, 'Dynamics of Sino-Turkish Relations: a Turkish Perspective', *East Asia* 32/1 (2015): pp. 7–23.

shelf in the Aegean (the PRC and Turkey held similar views on the definition of continental shelf) and the dispute over Cyprus. The Chinese leaders listened carefully to the Greek arguments but said nothing about the Cyprus issue or the Greek-Turkish feud. They maintained their policy of equidistance and only repeated their standard line on the need for the peaceful resolution of any outstanding disputes around the globe. This visit also provided the opportunity for Papandreou and the Greek delegation to keep the Chinese leaders informed on Greece's foreign policy and his initiatives to encourage multilateral Balkan co-operation and nuclear arms control (or even disarmament), which Beijing also now seemed to support.⁸⁰

The PASOK government and the prime minister himself had been working since 1982 for the establishment of a Balkan Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. While this initiative did not meet with any success and had already died by the mid-1980s, Papandreou had already played a role in the launch of the 'Six-Nation Initiative' for Peace and Disarmament, focusing on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the need for a nuclear test ban.⁸¹ The Chinese leadership endorsed these efforts, and, having reversed its previous position, stood in favour of the de-nuclearization of the Mediterranean and of the mutual withdrawal of the US and Soviet fleets. Zhao nevertheless insisted that NATO should remain strong as long as the Warsaw Pact remained intact and was sceptical on the prospect of a successful conclusion of US-Soviet negotiations on nuclear arms control. The two leaders reiterated that they condemned any act of domestic or international terrorism. But they also expressed their opposition to the employment of counter-terrorism measures, which might be used as an excuse for the violation of sovereignty of any state by another power (thus indirectly referring to US military action against Libya).⁸²

At the economic level, Andreas Papandreou was seeking opportunities to develop Greek export trade. The vast Chinese market had always appeared to be – at least in principle – as a lucrative destination for Greek exports and investments, and, by 1982–1983, Sino-Greek trade was expanding.⁸³ For this reason, approximately thirty businessmen and CEOs, representing private companies and state-owned enterprises and institutions, accompanied the Greek delegation to China to explore opportunities for the establishment of joint

80 *TO VIMA*, 6 April 1986; *TA NEA* [Greek mainstream daily], 9 April 1986.

81 For the Six-Nation Initiative, see D. R. Goyal, ed., *Nuclear disarmament: The six-nation initiative and the big power response* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1987); Mario Modiano, 'Delhi peace initiative endorsed in Athens', *The Times*, 1 February 1985.

82 *TA NEA*, 9 April 1986 and 10 July 1986.

83 *TA NEA*, 6 April 1986.

ventures or for the conclusion of trade agreements.⁸⁴ In addition, the Greek delegation was interested in importing Chinese coal and oil as a means to save currency, because both parties were willing to settle their commercial accounts by establishing, as far as possible, a bilateral clearing agreement. Furthermore, the Greeks were seeking to sell (or trade with other Chinese goods) various industrial machinery which came from failing or restructured businesses, and which could no longer be employed in Greece.⁸⁵

In July 1986, during Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang's tour of the Balkan and Mediterranean countries, the Chinese leader reciprocated Papandreou's previous visit and arrived in Athens on 10 July 1986.⁸⁶ This was the first visit to Greece made by a Chinese prime minister. He held talks with his Greek counterpart and the two leaders agreed to establish a joint ministerial commission to promote bilateral and economic relations.⁸⁷ Zhao expressed the Chinese concern about the tensions in the region and called for self-restraint. In what appeared to be an indirect hint at Greek-Turkish tensions, Zhao deplored the use or threat of force as a means of resolving problems and urged for negotiations to make the Mediterranean 'a sea of peace and friendship'.⁸⁸

Those successive state visits in April and July 1986 demonstrated the desire of leaders on both sides to continue to strengthen their relations. However, it seems that the efforts undertaken, especially in the fields of bilateral trade and joint ventures, did not yield any significant results. Meanwhile, the reforms initiated in China since 1978 were tackling the main pillars of the planned economy, but did not fundamentally introduce any democratization. Ordinary people, especially students and intellectuals, and some Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials had begun to clamour for political reform. When large rallies broke out in Beijing and other major Chinese cities, the Chinese state and party leaders opted for crushing the political reform movement.⁸⁹ Thus, the Greeks were shocked and appalled by the Tiananmen Square Massacre that took place on 4 June 1989, and which destroyed the perception that the Chinese regime was successfully leading the peaceful transformation of communism. The Greek press and the political parties unanimously condemned and criticized the bloody repression of the student protests. Soon Greece, along

84 *TO VIMA*, 6 April 1986; *OIKONOMIKOS TACHYDROMOS* [Greek economic magazine], 17 April 1986.

85 *TA NEA*, 6 April 1986.

86 *TA NEA*, 11 July 1986.

87 *TO VIMA*, 13 July 1986.

88 Mario Modiano, 'Zhao urges talks over Greek-Turkish dispute', *The Times*, 12 July 1986.

89 Westad, *Restless Empire*, 380–82.

with several other West European countries, imposed sanctions on the PRC.⁹⁰ Therefore, by the end of the Cold War, Sino-Greek relations deteriorated and bilateral ties were severed.

5 Conclusion

China's decision to seek improved diplomatic relations with the United States and other Western countries coincided with the Greek junta's willingness to normalize Greece's relations with China's radical, though anti-Soviet, regime, at a time when the Greek junta felt increasingly isolated. After the fall of the Greek junta and then Mao's death and the advent of the new Chinese leadership, bilateral relations remained friendly because the two parties did not have any conflicting interests and held similar views on various international affairs. Nevertheless, the development of Sino-Greek economic and trade relations was both slow and modest, as this did not constitute a priority, or, perhaps was not even a viable option, for either party.

Indeed, the available sources and the lack of literature on the history of Sino-Greek relations seem to indicate that they have been perceived as relatively peripheral by scholars and contemporary political leaders. It is true that political-diplomatic cooperation between the two countries did not expand greatly during the Cold War period. Greece was a small and relatively poor country which had very little to offer to China, especially in the fields of technology and expertise.⁹¹ The PRC was both unable and unwilling to entangle itself significantly in the eastern Mediterranean and South-eastern Europe. Beijing's main goal and concern remained the containment of Soviet power and influence in this region, which led it to endorse the strengthening of the major Western institutions – NATO and the EEC. It also opted to pursue a policy of equidistance between Greece and Turkey. But it is essential to keep in mind that China was pursuing a particular foreign policy in the region, as well as in Europe in general, and Greece played a role, albeit not a central one, in that policy. From Athens' perspective, successive Greek governments considered that improving relations with the PRC constituted a significant step towards the readjustment of Greek foreign policy to current trends in international affairs, such as China's reintegration into the international system. In addition, developing relations with Beijing was meant to signal the implementation

90 Garver, *China's Quest*, 487.

91 The Chinese did establish very close business relations with several Greek ship-owners, but despite the fact that it is highly interesting, this question cannot be analyzed in this chapter.

of a more independent, 'multidimensional' foreign policy. At the same time, Greece would not go so far as to undermine the détente with the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc states or fuel US distrust regarding the country's international orientation.

The events of June 1989 dealt a severe blow to the image of China in Greece. Only after the mid-1990s did Sino-Greek cooperation begin to develop again. Particularly after the mid-2000s, bilateral cooperation in various fields (shipping, trade, tourism, culture, and people-to-people exchanges) between the two countries expanded continuously. By that time, major economic and financial considerations began to shape the course of Sino-Greek relations: the PRC started considering Greece – mainly the port of Piraeus – as one of the main gateways to the European Union market, while successive Greek governments entertained great hopes for the development of Sino-Greek political, economic and trade cooperation as a means to overcome Greece's post-2009 financial and debt crisis.

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PART 2

*Transnational Networks, Propaganda, and
People-to-People Relations*



Unconditional Followers of the PRC ? Friendship Associations with China in France and Switzerland, 1950s–1980s

Cyril Cordoba and Liu Kaixuan*

1 Introduction

Recently, historians have pointed out the need to focus on non-state actors and transnational networks in order to surpass the ‘big power’ narrative and further understand what the Cold War meant to ordinary people.¹ From this perspective, friendship associations with communist states established in Western Europe deserve attention. The first friendship associations with the Soviet Union were created in the late 1920s and aimed at defending a positive image of the communist state. Despite self-proclaimed neutrality, their activities were tightly controlled by the Comintern.² This Soviet cultural diplomacy in inter-war Europe has been thoroughly examined by historians,³ while the friendship associations with the USSR during the Cold War in Europe have also been the subject of recent studies.⁴ Following this path, this chapter studies the friendship associations with China that were created in most Western European countries after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)

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- 1 Antoine Fleury and Lubor Jílek, eds., *Cultural, Intellectual and Scientific Contacts and Networks among Europeans during the Cold War* (Brussels, Bern: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009); Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza, eds., *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change* (London, New York: Routledge, 2012); Simo Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen, eds., *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015).
- 2 Sophie Cœuré, *La grande leueur à l’Est: les Français et l’Union soviétique, 1917–1939* (Paris: Seuil, 1999), pp. 135–136.
- 3 See for example Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jean-François Fayet, *VOKS : le laboratoire helvétique: histoire de la diplomatie culturelle soviétique durant l’entre-deux-guerres* (Chêne-Bourg: Georg, 2014).
- 4 Sonja Großmann, ‘Dealing with “Friends”: Soviet Friendship Societies in Western Europe as a Challenge for Western Diplomacy’, in *Beyond the Divide*, edited by Mikkonen and Koivunen, chapter 10; Matthieu Gillibert, ‘L’Association Suisse-URSS dans la Guerre froide: quête de légitimité dans les relations culturelles’, in *Rites, hiérarchies*, edited by Briegel Françoise and Farré Sébastien (Chêne-Bourg: Georg, 2010), pp. 133–145.

in 1949, focusing in particular on the cases of France and Switzerland. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the alternative, non-governmental approaches to China that were pursued in Western European countries, as well as the functioning of China's 'people's diplomacy' in Western Europe.⁵

One of these non-governmental approaches to China is the interest in Maoist China among populations in Western European countries. While the phenomenon of 'global Maoism' has begun to attract the attention of historians,⁶ recent publications help to understand and compare the influences of Maoism on leftist politics in developed and Third World countries during the 1960s and 1970s.⁷ However, these works deal more with how the Chinese Cultural Revolution rhetoric was integrated in the practices of foreign far-left politics,⁸ rather than the institutional relationship between these actors and the PRC, or their understanding of the country. Research relating to Chinese cultural diplomacy and propaganda directed toward foreign countries during the Cold War is far from being a well-constructed historiographical field. Existing works that deal with the question argue that the Chinese exterior propaganda (*waixuan* 外宣) system that emerged in the 1950s, incorporating, for example, the Foreign Languages Press and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC), was less sophisticated and efficient than imagined.⁹ Studies on relations between China and European countries do

5 Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

6 Alexander C. Cook, ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

7 Duri Beer, 'Die Lebenswelt der Maoistinnen und Maoisten in Zürich – Kognitionen, politisches Engagement und kollektive Identität der KPS/ML 1972–1987' (Master's thesis, Bern University, 2006); Angela Zimmermann, 'Maoisten in der Schweiz: Das lange rote Jahrzehnt der KPS/ML im Kontext der schweizerischen Linken' (Master's thesis, Zurich University, 2006); Sebastian Gehrig, Barbara Mittler, and Felix Wemheuer, eds., *Kulturrevolution als Vorbild?: Maoismen im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Frankfurt am Main [etc.]: P. Lang, 2008); Julia Lovell, 'The Cultural Revolution and Its Legacies in International Perspective', *The China Quarterly* 227, (September 2016): pp. 632–652, doi: 10.1017/S0305741016000722; Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

8 Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Matthew Daniel Rothwell, 'Transpacific Revolutionaries: The Chinese Revolution in Latin America' (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2009).

9 Julia Lovell, 'The Uses of Foreigners in Mao-Era China: "Techniques of Hospitality" and International Image-Building in the People's Republic, 1949–1976', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25, (December 2015): pp. 135–158, doi: 10.1017/S008044011500067; Cagdas Ungor, 'Reaching the Distant Comrade: Chinese Communist Propaganda Abroad (1949–1976)' (PhD dissertation, State University of New York, 2009).

not usually pay much attention to non-governmental structures in the West, except occasionally with regard to associations for bilateral business promotion.¹⁰ Nevertheless, some friendship associations with China have been studied in monographs on Sino-European relations, notably those in Britain¹¹ and Sweden,¹² while there exist three postgraduate theses dedicated to the associations in Belgium, Sweden and New Zealand.¹³

The Chinese 'people's diplomacy' (*renmin waijiao* 人民外交) and its manipulation of friendship (*youyi* 友誼) as a political instrument have been thoroughly explained by Anne-Marie Brady. Foreign friends, who 'entailed adherence to whatever the current political line was in Beijing, or at least for that part of it for which their cooperation was needed', were granted favours and used by the Chinese authorities for foreign propaganda and diplomatic manoeuvre.¹⁴ Focusing on French and Swiss friendship associations will be a useful complement to Brady's systematic study of Chinese institutions and tactics. This chapter will analyse how French and Swiss friends of China handled this friendship diplomacy, and show how the dichotomy between friends and enemies changed for these associations according to the PRC's evolving political agenda, and examine the degree to which the members of these associations adhered to these changes.

The pro-Chinese activity in France and Switzerland is especially relevant for an understanding of the transnational non-governmental networks in Sino-European relations. Firstly, these associations entertained close ties with the Chinese Embassy in Bern, which functioned as a very important hub for Maoist propaganda in Western Europe during the Cold War. The analysis of these ties and of the cross-border activities of the French and Swiss militants will allow for a better understanding of these transnational links. More importantly, the comparative examination of pro-Chinese associations in France and Switzerland is interesting since these two countries had very different traditions of communist activism and held contrasting positions in international Cold War

10 Martin Albers, *Britain, France, West Germany and the People's Republic of China, 1969–1972* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

11 Tom Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 114–211.

12 Perry Johansson, *Saluting the Yellow Emperor, a case of Swedish Sinography* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 155–220.

13 Sarah Windey, 'L'association Belgique-Chine: 1957–1983' (B.A. thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2005); Anne Hedén, 'Röd stjärna över Sverige' (Ph.D dissertation, Lund University, 2008); Alistair Shaw, 'Telling the Truth about China' (Ph.D dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington, 2010).

14 Brady, *Making the Foreign*, p. 19.

relations. Based on fresh archival research,¹⁵ this chapter will show how the general mode of functioning and the evolution of friendship associations with China within the two European countries converged rather than diverged. As will be demonstrated, the principal reason for this convergence is that the evolution of the associations was essentially influenced by China's domestic and foreign policies.

2 The 1950s: Friendship with the Socialist World

During the 1950s, the friendship organizations with China functioned as people's diplomacy instruments serving the interests of the international communist movement. They served the global foreign policy strategy of the communist countries and parties, by creating favourable international circumstances and by giving the Western communist parties a certain international prestige.¹⁶

The possibility of creating friendship associations with China was discussed in France and Switzerland immediately after the foundation of the PRC. The Franco-Chinese Friendship Association (*Association des amitiés franco-chinoises*, AACF) was officially founded on 15 May 1952, and its national board was composed of members of the French Communist Party (*Parti communiste français*, PCF) and fellow travellers.¹⁷ In Switzerland, Theodor Pinkus, a publisher, bookseller and noteworthy communist activist,¹⁸ discussed the foundation of a friendship association with the Chinese Embassy in Bern.¹⁹ From 1949 to the 1960s, Pinkus was in contact with *Guozi Shudian* (International Bookstore; an export centre for Chinese publications), a connection that made it possible to bypass the US boycott by sending Chinese propaganda to the United States from Switzerland.²⁰

¹⁵ The sources come from the friendship associations, interviews with various actors and their personal documents, and the archives of French and Swiss surveillance organizations. The names of the interviewees are pseudonyms, and all the translations from German and French sources are the work of the authors.

¹⁶ Annie Kriegel, *Le système communiste mondial* (Paris: PUF, 1984), pp. 84–86.

¹⁷ *Faguo fazhong youxie gaikuang* 法國法中友協概況 (Overview on AACF), 1 June 1953, Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives (CFMA), 110-00210-01.

¹⁸ Christian Baertschi, 'Pinkus, Theo', *Dictionnaire historique suisse* <<http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F23054.php>>, accessed 28 June 2017.

¹⁹ Note from the BUP O, 19 January 1951, Swiss Federal Archives (SFA), E4320B#1975/40#40*.

²⁰ Letter from Amalie Pinkus to *Guozi Shudian*, 17 July 1985, Zentralbibliothek Zurich, Archiv der Familie Pinkus, Ar. 07.36.

Although there were no proper Chinese friendship associations in Switzerland during the 1950s, Swiss communists had already engaged in propagating a positive image of the PRC. After the banning of the Communist Party of Switzerland in 1940, its members assembled the Swiss Labour Party (*Parti suisse du travail*, PST),²¹ whose mass organizations, such as People and Culture,²² served to spread information about the socialist countries. Several libraries and bookstores that offered documentation about China came to serve as meeting points for the groups describing themselves as friendly toward the PRC, particularly in Zurich (Pinkus Buchhandlung) and Geneva (Librairie Rousseau).

The Swiss city that was most important internationally for its pro-Chinese activities was Bern, where the Chinese Embassy functioned, at least until the mid-1960s, as the main centre for Maoist propaganda in Western Europe. As well as providing funds, it also furnished French and Swiss activists with material, such as movies and photographs promoting the success of building socialism in China.²³ During its first year of existence, the AAFC received 3,000 USD of direct financial support from Beijing.²⁴ In terms of propaganda materials, between 1952 and 1956, Beijing sent six different sets of pictorial exhibitions and twenty-seven films to the AAFC. The aim of these materials was to present a panorama of what was new and different under the Communist government, compared to the ancient dynasties and the days of the Nationalist government.

The propaganda work of the associations depended directly and heavily on Chinese materials. Controversial topics, such as the anti-rightist movement²⁵ that was started in the summer of 1957,²⁶ were barely mentioned. In October 1957, the AAFC magazine published an article on this issue that was originally printed in the official Chinese magazine *China Reconstructs*.²⁷ It was only in February of 1958 that an original article written by Jean Chesneaux (a historian of republican China and PCF member) was published, which criticized French newspapers that considered the whole campaign to be a trap, and followed the

21 André Rauber, *Histoire du mouvement communiste suisse. 2, De 1944 à 1991* (Geneva: Slatkine, 2000).

22 *Kultur und Volk* in the German part of Switzerland, and *Peuple et Culture* in the French part.

23 See the chapter by Ariane Knüsel in this volume.

24 *Faquo fazhong*, 1 June 1953, CFMA, 110-00210-01.

25 This Chinese political campaign lasted roughly from 1957 to 1958, and it had the particular aim of repressing the critics of the regime who expressed their disagreement during the precedent 'Hundred Flowers' campaign (1956–1957) that invited them to do so.

26 Andrew G. Walder, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 123–151.

27 'Les droitiers', *Paris-Pékin: la revue des amitiés franco-chinoises*, October 1957.

official Chinese version of the story by presenting the critical intellectuals as the true class enemies.²⁸

The AAFC's definition of friendship with China during the 1950s was not limited to forging a positive opinion of Mao's new regime in French society through propaganda. As the French government did not establish diplomatic relations with the PRC until 1964, another dimension of the AAFC's work included advocating France's diplomatic recognition of China. The president of the AAFC, Jean Dresch (a geographer and PCF party member), said in December 1952 that by providing the French public with 'true news' about China, the AAFC could help to create the conditions and atmosphere favourable for establishing diplomatic relations between France and China.²⁹

Meanwhile, the particular interests of the PCF were not forgotten by the AAFC. From the point of view of the French communist leaders who controlled the association through designated party members, friendship with China should not only serve their Chinese comrades, but also strengthen the party's influence in France. In December 1956, after the insurrections in Poland and Hungary had provoked a wave of anti-communist protests and resignations by Communist party intellectuals and fellow travellers in Western countries, the PCF sent two important party members, Jean Jérôme and Georges Soria, to the Chinese Embassy in Switzerland. They told the Chinese diplomats that 'taking into account the present situation, the Franco-Soviet cultural exchange [in 1957] would be difficult'. However, the campaign of projecting radiant images of communist regimes in France could not be interrupted. They therefore asked Beijing to 'intensify the work toward France' and to take up what the Soviets were forced to stop.³⁰

This close relationship between friendship activities and communist parties provoked suspicion from government authorities. In Switzerland, the Swiss Federal Police (*Bundespolizei*, BUPO) carefully policed these activities and began filing a soon-to-be massive database of organizers and participants seen as potentially dangerous people.³¹ Switzerland's recognition of the PRC corresponded to political and practical priorities, such as the country's official

28 Jean Chesneaux, 'Où en est la campagne de rectification', *Paris-Pékin: la revue des amitiés franco-chinoises*, February 1958.

29 Jean Dresch, 'Ce que nous voulons...', *Paris-Pékin: bulletin intérieur de l'AAFC*, December 1952.

30 *Fagong tichude mingnian dui wo duifa gongzuo de yijian* 法共提出的明年對我對法文化工作的意見 (PCF's opinion on our next year of cultural work in France), 27 December 1956, CFMA, 110-00668-01.

31 Georg Kreis, Jean-Daniel Delley, Otto Konstantin Kaufmann, et al., *La protection politique de l'Etat en Suisse: l'évolution de 1935 à 1990* (Bern, Stuttgart: P. Haupt, 1993).

neutrality and the protection of its economic interests on Chinese soil. Overall, there was little effort paid to the cultural exchanges with socialist China, and during the 1950s, the anti-communist atmosphere of Switzerland expressed itself on many occasions.

For instance, in 1954, a trip to the PRC by a delegation of Swiss personalities created a scandal because of the positive impression the participants expressed after their return. Alfred Rasser, a comedian who took part in the trip, even had some of his contracts with cabarets cancelled as a result of the affair.³² Likewise, in 1958, performances by the Peking Opera in Switzerland were also sources of trouble because of demonstrations by anti-communist organizations in front of the theatres.³³ In France, the Foreign Ministry tried to bypass the AAFIC by creating their own France-China association engaged in cultural relations.³⁴ However, there is no archival evidence showing any activity from this association, and the failure was probably due to the distrust of the PCF and the Chinese authorities.³⁵ The 1950s was thus a period when friendship associations functioned mainly in the interest of the international communist movement. French and Swiss governments distrusted them regardless of the governmental relations with China.

3 The 1960s: an Anti-revisionist Friendship for the World Revolution

During the 1960s, the friendship associations underwent great transformations due to the emergence of three factors: the Sino-Soviet split, the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, and the influence of Chinese radicalism on Western European far-left activists. As will be detailed in this study, these events led to a progressive disappearance of the people's diplomacy function. The friendship associations became an anti-revisionist propaganda instrument deployed by the PRC and by Western European anti-revisionist groups in favour of a Maoist revolution in the world.

After the first signs of Sino-Soviet ideological divergence appeared in the spring of 1960, the leaders of the PCF chose not to organize cultural activities

32 'Warum ich nach China ging', *Vorwärts*, 29 October 1954; 'Reisen nach dem roten Osten', *Die Weltwoche*, 12 November 1954, SFA, E4320B#1981/141#40*.

33 Zurich police report, 9 September 1958, SFA, E2003A#1971/44#450*.

34 Note from the cultural and technological exchanges department of the French Foreign Ministry, 18 November 1957, French Foreign Ministry Archives (FFMA), 119 QO 461.

35 *Fayou Mani'an tidao wo tong Fa lai wang zhong de yixie yijian* 法友馬尼安提到我同法來往中的一些意見 (French friend Magnien's opinions on our exchanges with France), 3 April 1957, CFM A, 110-00668-01.

celebrating Chinese National Day.³⁶ After the official condemnation of the CCP by the PCF on 14 December 1962, pro-Chinese PCF members began to write to the Chinese Embassy in Switzerland requesting copies of Chinese propaganda documents.³⁷ Among them was the secretary of the AAFIC's local committee in Marseille. The Chinese were satisfied by the attitudes and actions of these French leftists and decided to establish regular contacts with them. From this moment on, the meaning of 'friendship with China' changed dramatically for far-left activists in Western Europe. Taking a position in favour of China now meant not only merely refuting 'calumnies' about China (see above), but also standing firmly alongside the CCP against Soviet 'revisionists' in the struggle for the leadership of the international communist movement. The first French pro-Chinese communist organizations emerged from these local committees of the AAFIC. The members of the Marseille committee began to establish political structures that were separate from the AAFIC after 1964. They eventually formed, in December 1967, the French Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (*Parti communiste marxiste-léniniste de France*, PCMF), the 'official' pro-Chinese communist party led by Jacques Jurquet.³⁸

Pro-Chinese circles in Switzerland also emerged because of the Sino-Soviet split.³⁹ In 1964, the Lenin Centre – and its newspaper *October* – were created by Nils Andersson, a publisher who released texts from the CCP that focused on its disagreements with Moscow. The creation of this political organization followed the exclusion of militants from the traditional PST because of their support for Beijing. The pro-USSR communist parties were challenged by pro-Chinese activists in many countries. Jacques Grippa, the leader of the Belgian Maoist party, maintained contacts with the Swiss activists.⁴⁰ In 1967, after Andersson had been ejected from the Swiss territory for high treason and infringement of the country's independence,⁴¹ the Lenin Centre became the Organization of the Swiss Communists, and later evolved into the

36 Secretariat decisions, 9 August 1960, Seine-Saint-Denis archives (*Archives départementales de la Seine-Saint-Denis*, ADSSD), PCF papers, 2 NUM 4/12.

37 *Yu Fagong zuopai lianxi qingkuang* 與法共左派聯系情況 (Situation of the contact with the PCF's left), 19 January 1963, CFMA, 110-01620-03.

38 Robert Mencherini, 'JURQUET Jacques [JURQUET Alphonse, Jacques]', <<https://maitron-en-ligne-univ-parisi-fr.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/spip.php?article73536>>, accessed 5 May 2017.

39 Gérard Bulliard's Swiss Communist Party rapidly lost its credit. See Luc van Dongen, 'De toute façon la gauche était contrôlée', in *Mourir en manifestant: répressions en démocratie* edited by Charles Heimberg, Stéphanie Prezioso, and Marianne Enckell (Lausanne: AEHM O, Editions d'en bas, 2008), pp. 159–183.

40 Emile Rikir, *Le P.C.B. et la scission « grippiste » de 1963* (Bruxelles: CARCoB, 2002).

41 See François Vallotton, ed., *Livre et militantisme: La Cité Editeur, 1958–1967* (Lausanne: Éditions d'en bas, 2007).

Marxist-Leninist Swiss Communist Party (*Parti communiste suisse marxiste-léniniste*, P C S M L) in 1972.⁴²

The first Swiss friendship associations with China were created during these same years after the Sino-Soviet split. They were established independently, between 1964 and 1968, in three different locations within the French-speaking part of the country (Geneva, La Chaux-de-Fonds and Lausanne). Teachers and students who had worked and studied in China for several years played a key role in the creation of these three regional associations, which took the name of *Connaissance de la Chine* [Knowledge of China]. For the members themselves, the nature of relations between the pro-Chinese political movement and the friendship associations was not always immediately obvious, because they had to appear officially apolitical.⁴³ However, for the Swiss Federal Police, which monitored these associations intensely, the matter was clear, by 1969 at the latest: the Maoist party stood behind the association.⁴⁴ The concerns of the Swiss authorities centred on the financing of political organizations by the PRC, in fear of a fifth column.⁴⁵

In France, from 1963 to 1966 – a period in which three congresses of the AAFC were convened – the first pro-Chinese activists were engaged in a fierce power struggle with members of the P C F in a bid to take control of the national board of the AAFC.⁴⁶ For these pro-Chinese communists, the revisionists of the P C F had ‘undermined the work for Franco-Chinese friendship’ by prohibiting the AAFC from distributing Chinese documents.⁴⁷ For the P C F, the distribution of these documents meant intervening in the Sino-Soviet dispute, which according to them was not within the competence of the AAFC.⁴⁸ Finally, the election of the tenth national congress of the AAFC in June 1966 gave all the important positions in the new leadership to the Maoists.⁴⁹ Charles Bettelheim,

42 Nuno Pereira, ‘Anti-impérialisme et nouvelle gauche radicale dans la Suisse des années 68’ (PhD dissertation, University of Lausanne, 2015).

43 Transcription of a phone call between two militants, by the BUPO, 1 June 1967, SEA E4005#1995/305#607*.

44 Surveillance file of the BUPO on the P C S M L, 30 January 1969, SEA E4005#1995/305#607*.

45 Surveillance files of the BUPO about the P C S M L, 1964–1987, SEA E4005#1995/305#607*.

46 No available document indicates the influence on the AAFC of the establishment of Franco-Chinese diplomatic relations in 1964.

47 *Fazhong youxie quanguo huiyi de qingkuang yu women de duice* 法中友協全國會議的情況及我們的對策 (Situation of the AAFC’s national congress and our response), 26 June 1963, CFMA, 110-01619-02.

48 Report by Georges Thévenin, Paul Chareton, and Jacques Médard, 14 June 1963, Archives Nationales (AN, France), Thorez and Vermeersch papers, 626 AP/144.

49 ‘Bulletin intérieur de l’association des amitiés franco-chinoises’, September 1966, ADSSD, Régis Bergeron papers (RBP), 343 J Box 13.

economist and critic of the Soviet Union, was elected as the president. Another important leader in the AAFC was Régis Bergeron, a member of the PCMI and the editor-in-chief of its journal *L'Humanité nouvelle*. He was a PCF member and had taught French language and literature at Beijing University between 1959 and 1961. The married couple Joseph and Hélène Marchisio, who had lived in China working as French language teachers between 1959 and 1965, were also two key figures in the AAFC.⁵⁰

Now that French Maoists had taken full control of the friendship association, it was no longer necessary to disguise the close ties between the AAFC and political Maoism, especially in the context of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution that inspired Maoist political organizations around the world.⁵¹ A 1967 document from the AAFC national bureau stated that 'the friendship [with China] should correspond to the overall goals of the global anti-revisionist struggle. The essential mission of the association is to disseminate the Thought of Mao Zedong'.⁵² It was during this period that the contradiction between true and false friendship appeared: according to the Maoist leaders of the association, the true friends of China were those who were convinced by its ideology.⁵³

In Switzerland, within the context of the social protest movements associated with 1968,⁵⁴ the friendship with China also became more revolutionary than ever. Several revolutionary organizations claiming a Maoist inspiration bloomed during these years. As in France, the events of the Cultural Revolution, and especially the movement of the Red Guards, were celebrated within progressive circles, as the accounts delivered by Swiss citizens who worked as teachers or translators in Chinese universities or at the Foreign Languages Press confirmed their revolutionary character. Such information intensified their enthusiasm for the PRC, seen as a communist power which was avoiding the revisionist path of the USSR, and supporting the Third World.⁵⁵

50 Shan Yun, 'Mme Marchisio, une amie de toujours du peuple chinois', *Le Quotidien du Peuple*, 30 January 2004, <http://french.peopledaily.com.cn/french/200401/30/fra20040130_65120.html>, accessed 5 May 2017.

51 Lovell, 'The Cultural Revolution', in *Mao's Last Revolution* edited by Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

52 'Tirons les enseignements des réunions de travail du mois de novembre 1967', AN (France), Yves Hervouet papers, 590 AP 32.

53 Preparatory text for the 11th congress of the association, text four, history of the association (hereby History of the Association), ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 12.

54 Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, ed., *1968–1978: Ein bewegtes Jahrzehnt in der Schweiz* (Zurich: Chronos, 2009).

55 See, for example, *October* no. 27 (September/October 1968).

During the late 1960s, the radicalization of China changed the Western European friendship associations. In both France and Switzerland, these associations identified with anti-revisionist activism reinforced by the fervour of a new generation infused with the 'spirit of May 1968'. A revised Chinese foreign policy in the 1970s would bring new possibilities and challenges to the friendship associations.

4 1970–1976: the Difficult Path of a Loyal Friendship

Thanks to the improvement of the relationship between China and Western Europe, the first half of the 1970s was a period of expansion for friendship associations in France and Switzerland, which was nevertheless marked by intrinsic contradictions in the definition of their friendship with China. The activists in the associations were constantly searching for a balance between absolute loyalty towards whatever China said, and tolerance for a certain level of criticism of Beijing's policies.

The AAFC had suffered from the repressive measures taken by the French government against far-left organizations in the period of 1968–1970: French authorities accused their leaders of subversion,⁵⁶ and Chinese periodicals were banned by French customs authorities.⁵⁷ The extremely politicized definition of friendship did not facilitate the development of the AAFC. Many people from the national board of the AAFC left the association as a result of the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in the summer of 1966, probably as a reaction to the movement's violence.⁵⁸

Following Mao Zedong's decision to modestly open the gates of his country to the Western world, the beginning of the 1970s was a new departure point in Sino-French relations after the difficulties created by Chinese moral support for the May 1968 protesters.⁵⁹ In order to give Beijing a friendly signal, the French Foreign Ministry lifted the prohibition on the import of Chinese periodicals in France.⁶⁰ This improvement in Sino-French relations and the

56 Contribution to the preparation of congress, 1974, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 14.

57 A series of documents in the AN (France), Interior Ministry papers, 19860581/09-11, trace the import of Chinese periodicals from the end of 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s.

58 History of the association, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 12. Unfortunately the document does not cite the names of these people.

59 Albers, *Britain, France, West Germany*, pp. 37–38.

60 Letter of French Foreign minister to French Interior minister, 26 February 1970, AN (France), Interior Ministry papers, 19860581/09.

French public's increasing interest in China was seen by the national leaders of the AAFC and the PCMI as a good opportunity for the association to develop among a larger and not necessarily activist public.⁶¹ People who did not have a history of Maoist activism began to participate in local committees of the association. From having about thirty local committees in 1971, the AAFC grew to accommodate more than sixty local committees in 1974, and around 140 in 1977. Membership increased from more than 2,000 in 1974 to roughly 4,000 in 1975.⁶²

Although PCMI leaders still thought that their party should control the AAFC politically as a mass organization to transform sympathizers of China into Maoist activists, they called on their party members working in the AAFC to avoid confounding the activities of the party and the association and 'imposing their political views on friends of China'.⁶³ In June 1974, the eleventh congress of the AAFC declared itself satisfied by the interest in China from French people of different backgrounds, and defined the objective of the association as being to develop the friendship with China among all social classes in France.⁶⁴ However, this was not an easy mission, because the AAFC was at the same time anxious to denounce the attacks on Chinese domestic and foreign policy issues being made by what it called the 'enemies of China'. Internal documents of the AAFC admitted that middle-class people were prone to asking many questions on the absence of liberty in China,⁶⁵ with no evidence to show that the AAFC activists were able to find a convincing answer. Meanwhile, from Sino-American rapprochement to the diplomatic recognition of Augusto Pinochet's Chile, the AAFC had to defend Chinese foreign policy initiatives during the 1970s against commentaries and critics claiming that China was now playing the game of great powers, rather than supporting revolutionary movements throughout the world.⁶⁶ Since most of its leaders and active members were Maoists, it was important for the AAFC to explain to the public that China's foreign policy remained revolutionary. They argued that firstly, the PRC was a Third World country that supported Europe and France, remaining independent from the two superpowers of the First World.⁶⁷ Secondly, a country

61 Brochure of the 13th congress, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 13.

62 Headquarter report, October 1977. ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 12.

63 Declaration of PCMI, not dated, but probably 1973, Archives of *La Contemporaine* (LC, formerly *Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine*), PCMI papers, F delta res 613/70.

64 Brochure of the 13th congress, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 13.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 The Theory of Three Worlds was a strategic foreign policy concept – formulated by Mao and expressed by Deng Xiaoping at the United Nations in 1974 – which considered the

that made an effort to develop real socialism within its borders could not be reactionary in its foreign relations.⁶⁸ However, these arguments also proved to be insufficiently effective.⁶⁹

In Switzerland, the success of the trips to China that the friendship associations had regularly organized since 1971 extended the range of their audience to the whole country. The evolution of the friendship movement into a more militant organization is illustrated by the transfer of its centre from the French-speaking part of Switzerland to Swiss-German towns, especially towards Zurich, a very active centre for the movements of the radical left. The association's name, 'Knowledge of China', was changed to the more explicit 'Friendship with China'. The multiplication of friendship associations in this part of Switzerland went on until 1976, when it covered eleven of the twelve major Swiss cities. Because of the federal structure of the country, language differences, and ideological disagreements, no national umbrella association could be founded before the 1980s. Encouraged in this matter by the CPAFFC, all the local associations assembled in 1982 under the name 'Swiss Associations for the Friendship with China' (*Associations suisses d'amitié avec la Chine*, ASAC). As the associations became more influential, their growth reached its peak between 1977 and 1979, with more than 1,500 members and around one hundred people travelling to China under their patronage annually.⁷⁰

As in France, the Swiss associations focused on gaining the support of all social classes to the friendship with China. In the 1970s, the Chinese authorities asked the Swiss friendship associations to respect the Leninist theory of a distinction between vanguard party and mass organization. The instructions were, for example, not to be too openly leftist, or to approve and defend the foreign and domestic policy of Beijing.⁷¹ The P C S M L also used the Theory of Three Worlds to analyse international politics and to call for an alliance with the Third World against the United States and the USSR.⁷²

world to be divided between the First World, comprised of US and USSR imperialisms; the Second World, comprised of other developed countries, such as Canada, Japan, and the European countries; and the Third World, comprised of developing countries, such as China, Africa, and Latin America.

68 Transcription of AAFC national bureau meeting, 2 November 1974, LC, P C M I F papers, F delta res 613/70.

69 'Orientation de notre propagande', LC, P C M I F papers, F delta res 613/70.

70 Discourse for the 30 years of the PRC, 1 October 1979, Cantonal Archives of Vaud (CAV), PP 929/28; Chronological report for the delegation, July 1977, Archives contestataires (AC), Charles Philipona papers (CP), AC-002-CP-S09-SS115-Do29.

71 Documents of the delegations of the ASAC in 1975, 1977 and 1979, AC-002-CP-S09-SS115-Do29.

72 See, for example, *October* no. 118, (January 1978).

Compared to the French case, the Swiss associations focused much more on defending China's position on Tibet or Taiwan.⁷³ The way the mass media and the Swiss government dealt with these two 'Chinese provinces' was considered to be anti-revolutionary propaganda by the friendship associations.⁷⁴ During one of their meetings in Beijing in 1975, the CPAFFC asked the ASAC to fight 'the anti-Chinese activities of the Chiang Kai-shek gang and of the Dalai Lama in Switzerland [through] cultural troupes such as acrobatics, ballet, painting exhibitions, etc. [against] little fistfuls of reactionaries in Taiwan and around the Dalai Lama'.⁷⁵ This advice was immediately followed by the arrival in Switzerland of the Chinese national teams for ping-pong⁷⁶ and badminton in April 1976.⁷⁷

This close political link between friendship associations and Chinese authorities did not facilitate their objective of being accessible and accepted by everybody. Even in November 1976, the arrival in Switzerland of an artistic ensemble from Shanghai still raised political issues. During one of their meetings about this event, the members regretted that 'the cities of Zurich and Bern do not wish to see their name associated with one of our associations in an official welcoming ceremony. For these towns, our organizations are far too political for their official representatives to accept their participation in the reception, if it is organized by us'.⁷⁸

This loyalty towards Beijing was compulsory. As in the 1950s, the friendship associations in France and Switzerland could not survive without Chinese support in terms of access to the country and propaganda materials. In both countries, the most influential way to promote a positive image of China was in the conferences given by members of the associations, or Chinese affairs experts who had travelled to China. The successful Sino-Belgian writer, Han Suyin, gave many conferences for friendship associations in both countries.⁷⁹ Besides the conferences, the main activities of the associations were the distribution of Chinese propaganda material, notably magazines, and movies borrowed from the Chinese embassy, mainly documentaries and revolutionary operas.⁸⁰

73 Bulletin *Tibet, from slavery to liberty* from *Connaissance de la Chine*, Librairie Basta, October 1974.

74 See *October* no. 22 (September 1967), no. 29 (January/February 1969), no. 43 (August 1971), no. 49 (April 1972), no. 84 (March 1975), and no. 127 (October 1978).

75 ASAC, Report of the national federation about the discussion with the CPAFFC, October 1975, AC-002-CPS09-SS115-D029.

76 ASAC, Report on national activities, 13 April 1976, AC-002-SS-115-D029.

77 ASAC, Report on national activities, June 1977, AC-002-SS-115-D029.

78 ASAC, Report on national activities, 11 September 1976, AC-002-SS-115-D029.

79 Chronicle of the association of Lausanne, 19 August 2005, CAV, PP 929/1.

80 List of the movies from the embassy, Archives of *Freundschaft mit China* Bern (AFCB), binder no. 2.

Both French and Swiss friendship associations received the propaganda material from *Guozi Shudian* – with massive discounts, if not for free – and used the benefits of the sales as an important source of income.⁸¹ Chinese authorities subscribed to hundreds of copies of *October* through *Waiwen Shudian* (Bookstore for Foreign Languages, importers of foreign books and periodicals) to help finance the emerging pro-Chinese movement in Switzerland.⁸² The Swiss federal police closely investigated the financial support from China, and also from Albania, which functioned as China's ally in Europe. It was Radio Tirana, where Nils Andersson worked after his ejection from Switzerland,⁸³ which represented the CCP's voice in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s. The BUPO recorded approximately one trip to Albania each year by Swiss Maoists in the periods of 1964–1970 and 1974–1977.⁸⁴ These contacts aroused the curiosity of the police and led to a lot of speculation about possible subversion and guerrilla and espionage training camps.⁸⁵ Be this as it may, Tirana did indeed distribute significant amounts of money to Marxist-Leninist movements in Europe, including the P C S M L.⁸⁶

In conclusion, although friendship associations benefited from Chinese diplomatic overtures during the first half of the 1970s, in terms of their ability to grow and attract a larger public than those sympathetic to Maoism, their ideological basis was still a total acceptance of Maoist ideas, which created difficulties for their objective of expansion.

5 After 1976: Finally a Non-political Friendship?

After the death of Mao Zedong on 9 September 1976, a series of radical upheavals in Chinese politics began. In October, the Gang of Four were arrested.⁸⁷ Subsequently, in 1980, they were condemned for atrocities perpetrated during

81 *Guozi Shudian* bills to the P C S M L from 1967 to 1972, intercepted by the BUPO, SEA, E4005#1995/305#607*.

82 Order from *Waiwen Shudian* to *October*, 8 December 1964, intercepted by the BUPO, SEA, E4005#1995/305#607*.

83 Nils Andersson, *Mémoire éclatée: de la décolonisation au déclin de l'occident* (Lausanne: Éditions d'en bas, 2016).

84 Surveillance files of the BUPO about the P C S M L, 1964–1987, SEA, E4005#1995/305#607*.

85 Note of the BUPO, 27 June 1969, SEA, E4320C#1994/78#705*.

86 Nicolas Miletitch, 'Révélation des archives de Tirana', *Cahiers d'histoire sociale* 6 (spring-summer 1996), pp. 83–96.

87 Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan were four paramount Chinese leaders behind Mao during the Cultural Revolution. See Alexander C. Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on trial: Mao and the Gang of Four* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

the Cultural Revolution. The disgraceful fall of the four officials, which had long been considered as Mao's closest allies, represented a shock for most admirers of the People's Republic. It took several years for members of the friendship associations, who had always followed the official line from China, to reflect on the relationship between their friendships with China and their loyalty towards Beijing. They finally began to depoliticize and professionalize themselves from the start of the 1980s, but still failed to survive the negative influence of the 1989 Tiananmen Square repression.

For the Swiss friends of China, the unfolding events led to many debates and even a sense of having been tricked by propaganda. For the first time, the association's members chose not to blindly obey.⁸⁸ That is why the ASAC asked for the expertise of H  l  ne Marchisio, general secretary of the AAFC, who called on its members to support the new Chinese government in November 1976.⁸⁹ Marchisio's experience with Chinese politics gave her great credibility, and helped the friends of China to understand the events. She gave a speech in Switzerland, which was published in a brochure of the ASAC about the Gang of Four.⁹⁰ The words used in the personal notes of some leaders of the ASAC⁹¹ in their bulletins or conference speeches,⁹² were cautiously selected, and the argumentation carefully built. The description of the events was scrupulously sculpted according to the Chinese propaganda, and deliberately rejected the traditional media (seen as Russian or American propaganda). The China watchers, and dissident interpreters such as Pierre Ryckmans were ignored: the only sources judged to be credible were the Chinese ones.⁹³

In France, members of the AAFC were also divided on the issue of the Gang of Four. During its twelfth national congress in late 1977, the entire association engaged in an intense debate over its future orientation. The national board welcomed the new political atmosphere in China, and wanted to redefine the essence of the 'friendship with China'.⁹⁴ National leaders from the AAFC preferred to speak of friendship with China instead of friendship with socialist China. The local committees' reactions toward these approaches were divided.

88 Report on the delegation of 1977, July 1977, AC-002-SS115-Do29.

89 The speech is mentioned in *Aujourd'hui la Chine*, no. 4, December 1976.

90 *A propos de la lutte contre les 'Quatre'*, Lausanne, Connaissance de la Chine, 1976, pp. 4–8.

91 Notebooks of Michel Zaugg from his 1977 trip to the PRC.

92 Report of the police of Zurich, 10 October 1977, SEA E4320C#1995/390#903.

93 Interview by Cyril Cordoba with Michel Zaugg, 4 February 2016. Ryckmans, a Belgian Sinologist, was one of the first Westerners to describe the excesses of the Cultural Revolution and to denounce the blindness of the Western Maoists in 1971.

94 Orientation document, probably prepared by the national bureau of the AAFC, 1977, ADSSD, RBP, 343J Box 12.

Many of them did not approve of the way the Cultural Revolution had ended. The Reims committee spoke of the 'repression of the heroes of the Cultural Revolution' in China and refused the 'opportunism and conformism' of the national board of the AAFC.⁹⁵ Favourable voices pushing to change the orientation of the AAFC were rare. One example was the Rennes committee, which provided a detailed critique of the organizational decisions made by the association during the Cultural Revolution.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the Maoists of the PCMIF who were working in the AAFC failed to maintain the association on its former track. The twelfth Congress approved the arrest of the Gang of Four. Many Maoists left the association because of this new orientation – or even sooner, during the preparations for the congress. The most famous among them was Charles Bettelheim, who resigned from the presidency in May 1977. The departure of the Maoists caused a decline in enrolment in the association.⁹⁷ Still, internal critics voiced against the AAFC's past loyalty towards Beijing continued until 1980.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, the end of the 1970s also saw the decline of the PCMIF in France.⁹⁹ Finally, during the thirteenth Congress of the AAFC in June 1981, newcomers replaced old activists as executive managers of different sectors of the AAFC (such as literature, cinema, etc.).¹⁰⁰ The 'intellectual quality' of the association's magazine in the new format was praised by established scholars.¹⁰¹ In 1984, leaders of the association were apparently happy to speak of the establishment of a professional team specialising in tourism, and an increasing degree of cooperation between the AAFC and Chinese and French institutions, with the aim of promoting China in France. The leaders also confirmed the AAFC's willingness to stay independent from the authorities of both countries.¹⁰²

As in France, the Swiss friendship associations suffered from a severe reduction in membership after the death of Mao, due to political disillusionment

95 Document of the Reims committee, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 12.

96 Document of the Rennes committee, 28 March 1977, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 12.

97 Documents of the national committee, January 1982, AN (France), Yves Hervouet papers, 590 AP 32.

98 For example, 'Rapport de la région Est', 14 November 1980, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 12.

99 Hugo Melchior, 'Le militantisme révolutionnaire à l'heure de la clandestinité dans les années 1968', *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 133 (January 2017): pp. 39–54, doi: 10.3917/ving.133.0039.

100 Brochure on the 13th Congress, 6–8 June 1981, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J Box 14.

101 Jean-Luc Domenach, 'Aujourd'hui la Chine, supplément au no. 32, avril 1984', *Politique étrangère* 49, no. 3 (1984), pp. 744–745.

102 'Rapport d'activité par la secrétaire générale Noëlle Simon et la secrétaire générale adjointe Marcelle Le Graët', ADSSD, RBP, 343 J box 13.

about the Third World and the isolation of the PCSML in Switzerland.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, they survived, thanks to a wider – i.e., not necessarily purely ideological – interest in China among the population and their experience in the organization of trips.¹⁰⁴ They founded their own travel agency, Panda, in 1983, which they called ‘the financial arm of the ASAC’.¹⁰⁵ But even if the opening up of China to mass tourism offered new opportunities, the end of more than fifteen years of practically monopolizing Chinese visas for Swiss tourists (because of their privileged relations with the embassy) meant that the associations ‘lost the privilege of being almost the only ones able to organize trips’.¹⁰⁶ Swiss friendship associations participated, however, in establishing several partner agreements, with twinned cities such as Zurich and Kunming (1982), which illustrated how the friendship associations evolved into partnerships that the Swiss authorities wished to work with, and not against.¹⁰⁷

However, friendship associations in France and Switzerland were still unable to survive the negative political impact on China’s global image of the 1989 Tiananmen repression. In Switzerland, even if some groups of hardliners continued to support the Chinese government outside the ASAC, most of the local associations expressed their disagreement with the methods of Beijing, while supporting the movement of the Chinese students.¹⁰⁸ In both countries, the friendship associations encountered financial difficulties during the 1980s, which worsened as a consequence of the Tiananmen Square repression.¹⁰⁹ Tourists stopped travelling to China, thereby depriving the associations of one part of their financial resources.¹¹⁰ The ASAC’s travel agency was liquidated in 1990.¹¹¹ In Switzerland, most pro-Chinese groups ceased their activities after June 1989¹¹² and the national association was officially dissolved in 1992, while the precise date of the dissolution of the French AAF is not known.

¹⁰³ See Angela Zimmermann, ‘Das lange rote Jahrzehnt der KPS/ML’, in *Kulturrevolution*, edited by Gehrig et al., pp. 77–105.

¹⁰⁴ Report of the association of La Chaux-de-Fonds, 10 June 1977, AC-002-CPS09-SS115-Do29.

¹⁰⁵ ASAC, annual account, 22 December 1983, AFCB, binder no. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Report of *Connaissance de la Chine* Lausanne to the ASAC, 3 May 1978, AC-002-SS-115-Do29.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from the city of Bern to the ASAC, 21 August 1986, AFCB, binder no. 5.

¹⁰⁸ *Freundschaft mit China* Bern to the Chinese students in Switzerland, 14 September 1989, AFCB, binder no. 5.

¹⁰⁹ For Switzerland, see ASAC, annual account, 4 June 1988, AFCB, binder no. 5.

¹¹⁰ Regarding France, see Minutes of the AAF’s administration council, 11 March 1990, ADSSD, RBP, 343 J box 25.

¹¹¹ ASAC, annual account, 23 March 1990, AFCB, binder no. 5.

¹¹² Minutes of the discussion about the future of the ASAC, 4 November 1989, AFCB, binder no. 5.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the development of the friendship associations with China in France and Switzerland in the period from the 1950s to the 1980s cannot be understood without considering the different turns of the PRC's general domestic and foreign policies, the development of the Communist Movement in Western Europe, or Sino-European relations. However, the twists and turns in Chinese domestic and foreign politics and the associations' commitment to following the Beijing line were definitively the most important factors. The reason for this is that until the late 1970s, the associations' notion of friendship coincided with an almost total acceptance of Chinese policy options.

Unlike in France, the lack of a strong communist party in Switzerland resulted in the absence of an organized pro-Chinese friendship association during the 1950s. Yet, the principles of a politicized friendship still existed. During the 1960s and 1970s, the friendship associations in these two countries were controlled by Maoist parties, politically and financially supported by China,¹¹³ which used the associations as mass organizations to extend their influence. Compared to their Soviet counterparts in Western Europe, the pro-Chinese associations played a much less significant role in governmental cultural exchange initiatives during the Cold War, regardless of the diplomatic relations between the two countries with China. More importantly, the political guideline of friendship associations with China shifted more frequently and violently due to the turbulence of Mao's China.¹¹⁴

It was only during the 1980s, in the context of the decline of global political Maoism, and with China completely abandoning its agenda of world revolution, that French and Swiss friendship associations with China became depoliticized and professionalized in the area of tourism and other bilateral exchange affairs. However, the fatal impact on the friendship associations of the Tiananmen repression in 1989 demonstrated the difficulty of maintaining a friendship without being influenced by politics.

Drawing from available studies on Western friendship associations with China, it can be concluded that they all organized the same kind of activities and had similar relationships with Communist and Maoist parties in their country. They differed in some particular aspects, such as the strong emphasis on economic affairs in the Belgian association¹¹⁵ or the absence of renowned

¹¹³ Unfortunately, the authors do not have sufficient archival documents to specify the role of the Chinese embassy in Paris.

¹¹⁴ Sonja Großmann, 'Dealing with "Friends"', pp. 205–210.

¹¹⁵ Sarah Windey, 'L'association Belgique-Chine'.

public figures in Swiss associations. But above all, they all experienced difficulties adjusting themselves to the changing Chinese politics.

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China's Communist Youth League, Transnational Networks and Sino–European Interactions in the Early Cold War

Sofia Graziani*

1 Introduction

The birth of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 occurred at a time when the world order was being divided into two opposing blocs. China's foreign policy was thus, from the beginning, heavily influenced by the logic of the Cold War. The Sino-Soviet alliance, formalised in February 1950, was seen by Communist leaders (particularly Mao Zedong) as a necessity for the PRC given the emerging international context. The outbreak of the Korean War (1950–1953) further consolidated China's position within the Soviet bloc, leading the majority of Western states to refuse to recognise the newly established Communist government.¹

For years Mao-era China has been portrayed as sealed off from the European – and, more broadly, the Western – community. However, recent studies have started to complicate this image while also bridging the existing gap between research on Europe in a Cold War environment and studies on the history of the PRC. What emerges is the fact that a significant flow of exchanges occurred between Socialist China and the Western world, and that unofficial contacts were developed with capitalist European countries in the years of intense Cold War (1950s–1960s).²

* The author would like to thank the editors for their comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

- 1 On China's foreign policy during the Cold War years, see for instance Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, *After Leaning to One Side: China and its Allies in the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).
- 2 See for instance Matthew D. Johnson, 'From Peace to the Panthers: PRC Engagement with African-American Transnational Networks, 1949–1979', *Past and Present* 8 (2013): 233–257; Julia Lovell, 'The Uses of Foreigners in Mao-era China: 'Techniques of Hospitality' and International Image-building in the People's Republic, 1949–1976', *Transactions of the RHS* 25 (2015): 135–158; Beverly Hooper, *Foreigners under Mao: Western Lives in China, 1949–1976* (Hong Kong:

In the period immediately following the end of the Korean War, which was marked by an improvement in the PRC's international standing (i.e., China's participation in the Geneva Conference 1954) and the consolidation of the Communist power at home, the Chinese government made efforts to increase links with the people of many countries in different parts of the world, regardless of the ideo-political alignments of their respective governments. By the mid-1950s, China's renewed international activism intertwined with the interests and actions of European non-governmental actors, which strove to promote political, economic and cultural exchanges with Socialist China to get around the lack of diplomatic recognition and pave the way for it at the same time.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-led Communist Youth League (CYL) played a significant role in China's broader outward strategies. However, the international dimension of the CYL work has been largely neglected so far. This chapter attempts to bridge this gap by building on and further developing the findings from a previous study on the interactions between Italian left-wing party-affiliated youth organisations and China's youth in the 1950s.³ Specifically, it examines the role of international youth organisations as privileged channels for Sino-European socio-cultural (and political) dialogue at the time of intense Cold War. By focusing on the CYL engagement with the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), this study argues that international 'front' organisations provided the newly established PRC with precious opportunities to build contacts and develop exchanges with Western European youth, and to project its image as a peaceful country worldwide. The chapter first provides an overview of the CYL's role in Mao's China, both domestically and within China's outward strategy. Then, it documents China's engagement with Soviet-dependent youth organisations in the 1950s. In particular, it examines the international delegation to China in 1956 which resulted from the cooperation with the WFDY and brought a number of young foreign representatives to visit

Hong Kong University Press, 2016). On Sino-European contacts beyond conventional diplomatic channels see, among the others, Guido Samarani, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Sofia Graziani, eds., *Roads to Reconciliation: People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy During the Cold War Period (1949–1971)* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2018); Angela Romano and Valeria Zanier, eds., *Circumventing the Cold War: The parallel diplomacy of economic and cultural exchanges between Western Europe and Socialist China in the 1950s and 1960s*, Special issue, *Modern Asian Studies* 51, 1 (2017); see also the essays which appeared in Guido Samarani and Sofia Graziani, eds., 'Essays from the International Symposium on Italy, Europe and China during the Cold War Years', special section, *Lengzhan guojishi yanjiu* [Cold War International History Studies] 19/20 (2015).

3 Sofia Graziani, 'The case of youth exchanges and interactions between the PRC and Italy in the 1950s', *Modern Asian Studies* 51, 1 (2017): 194–226.

Socialist China for the first time. Here, the analysis focuses on a few individual experiences of Western participants, who came from Great Britain and Italy – two countries that, despite the logic of the Cold War, boasted close ties with Socialist China – and illuminates the complexity of being a short-term ‘foreign guest’. Young delegates as diverse as the British youth theatre director Michael Croft and the Italian communist Bruno Bernini joined the 1956 delegation, and gained various impressions and understandings of the country’s development and policies. Yet they remained convinced of the importance of China as a rising power which had a role to play in Asia and in the world.

2 The CYL in Mao-era China

Mass organisations had played a prominent role in the institutional system of the PRC since its earliest days, functioning as transmission belts between the Party/State and different sectors of society. The youth became the target of specific CCP-controlled mass organisations designed to mobilise the new generation in support of the Party objectives and to create loyal citizens dedicated to the ‘new China’. The leading organisation was the All-China Youth Federation, a national umbrella organisation which coordinated various youth groups and whose membership included, among others, the All-China Students Federation and the CYL. In fact, the CYL played a key political role in the entire system while also running the Young Pioneers, the organisation for children. Originally founded in 1922 and named New Democratic Youth League (NDYL) from 1949 to 1957, the Youth League primarily functioned as a bridge linking the CCP with the nation’s youth, while also serving as a training ground for future CCP members and cadres at all levels of the Party and government apparatus. The case of Hu Yaobang’s career (from being Secretary of the Youth League in the 1950s and early 1960s to Secretary General of the CCP in the 1980s) is the most prominent example in this respect. The unique position of the CYL as the Party’s ‘main assistant’ and ‘reserve force’ was formally recognised by the Party’s 1956 Constitution, and the CYL became a crucial component of the Chinese political system.⁴

Parallel to the structure of the CCP, the NDYL/CYL organisation was subordinated to the CCP, whose control and supervision was guaranteed through the placement of party members in leading positions within the League at all levels and through party committee leadership in the League organ at the same

4 On the historical and political role of the Youth League in China see, Sofia Graziani, *Il Partito e i giovani. Storia della Lega giovanile comunista in Cina* (Venezia: Cafoscarina, 2013).

level. A well-developed basic-level organisation made it possible to promote extensive political indoctrination and participation at the grassroots level. By the early 1950s, the organisational system included the China Youth Press and the official organ of the CYL, the China Youth Daily, which played a major role in the propaganda aimed at the youth along with the magazine China Youth. The Youth League organisation and work was highly influenced by the Soviet Union, where many young cadres were trained and educated in the 1950s. As early as 1951, the first group of Chinese cadres went to Moscow to study at the Central School of the Komsomol, the junior partner of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. From 1951 to 1956, a Chinese delegation was sent to the USSR every year, with the largest one being the group of Chinese that left in the summer of 1953.⁵

The number of League members in China grew steadily, from 190,000 in 1949 to 25 million in 1959, with a significant increase in the period of 1955–1956. However, the distribution of membership was not homogeneous, as members tended to concentrate in the cities.⁶ In fact, the official administrative structure and the control system put in place by the Communist authorities in those years facilitated the mobilisation and recruitment of the youth in urban areas. In 1956, about fifty-seven per cent of university students were League members.⁷ At Peking University, the percentage of League members increased from forty-two per cent in 1953 to seventy-eight per cent in 1957.⁸ In the late 1950s, political education became the focus of CYL work, and the implementation of the Great Leap Forward led to the strengthening of the Party committees' control and leadership over the League organisation.⁹

5 Gongqingtuan zhongyang qingyunshi gongzuo zhidao weiyuanhui 共青团中央青运史工作指导委员会, *Zhongguo qingshaonian yanjiu zhongxin* 中国青少年研究中心, “*Cikasha*” *liuxue suiyue. Sulian zhongyang tuanxiao zhongguoban xueyuan huiyilu* 茨卡莎留学岁月--苏联中央团校中国班学员回忆录 [Recollections of Chinese students attending the Youth League Central School in the Soviet Union] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2003), 234–235.

6 Victor Funnell, ‘The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949–1966’, *The China Quarterly* 42 (1970): 114–116 and 128; Zheng Guang 郑光, *Zhongguo gongqingtuan jianshi* 中国共青团简史 [Concise history of China's CYL] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1992), 133–134.

7 *Zhongguo jiaoyu nianjian 1949–1981* 中国教育年鉴 1949–1981 [China Education Yearbook 1949–1981] (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 1984), 427.

8 Gongqingtuan Beijing daxue weiyuanhui 共青团北京大学委员会, *Gongqingtuan zai Beida* 共青团在北大 [The CYL at Peking University] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2004), 363–364.

9 Paul Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League 1949–1979*, Griffith Asian Papers (Nathan: Griffith University, School of Modern Asian Studies, 1982), 55–61.

As the political atmosphere radicalised, the CYL was urged to play a leading role in 'revolutionising' the youth.¹⁰ Political indoctrination intensified, and the young, especially the students, were specifically pressed to show their active commitment to the revolution and particularly to Mao's vision. As a result, competition to join the CYL increased as many young people strove to become political activists.¹¹ However, on the onset of the Cultural Revolution, the CYL was replaced with Red Guard organisations.¹² In June 1966, the CYL's Beijing Committee was purged, and its Central Committee and several of its leaders were singled out for criticism later that year. Since then, the CYL organisation ceased to exist in any meaningful way for years until the mid-1970s, when it was gradually revived first at the local level and then at the national level.¹³

Up until the mid-1960s the CYL thus played a crucial role in domestic political campaigns, contributing to the achievements of the party's goals. Yet, as will be shown in the following section, official youth organizations were also active in promoting China's external contacts and exchanges.

3 The International Dimension of the Youth League Work

Since the establishment of the PRC, foreign relations were conducted through both formal and informal channels. A significant part of China's outward strategies was implemented through people-to-people diplomacy in the hope of building a network of ties outside the immediate government sphere. This networking would ideally result in a friendly popular atmosphere in Western European countries and, in turn, pave the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations with non-recognising countries. Thus, a plethora of friendship,

10 James Townsend, *The Revolutionization of Chinese Youth: A Study of Chung-kuo Ch'ing-nien*, China Research Monograph (Berkeley: University of California, Center for Chinese Studies, 1967).

11 See for instance Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen and Jonathan Unger, 'Students and Class Warfare: The Social Roots of the Red Guard Conflict in Guangzhou (Canton)', *The China Quarterly* 83 (1980): 397–446.

12 Victor Funnell, 'The Chinese Communist Youth Movement'; Shelah G. Leader, 'The Communist Youth League and the Cultural Revolution', *Asian Survey* 14, 8 (1974): 700–715.

13 Li Yuqi 李玉奇, *Zhongguo gongqingtuan shigao 1922–2008* 中国共青团史稿 1922–2008 [A history of China's CYL 1922–2008] (Beijing, Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2009), 277–290.

united front and mass associations was assigned the task of creating and maintaining links to foreign political groups and civil society actors.¹⁴

Italy, France and Great Britain were among those major Western European powers where various non-governmental actors played a significant role in developing and promoting close political, economic and cultural ties with Socialist China at that time. In countries like Italy and France, relations with Socialist China were facilitated by the existence of left-wing parties, which provided the basis for the emergence of economic and cultural friendship associations. Unlike Italy and France, however, Great Britain had recognised the PRC early in 1950, to protect its commercial interests in China, and maintained a fundamental presence in the area through the colony of Hong Kong. Yet, it encountered serious difficulties in negotiating diplomatic normalization. Both conflict and cooperation characterized China-Britain relations at that time, as Chinese leaders were aware that, despite its 'special relationship' with the United States, Britain was different and could not pose a real threat to China. Within this framework, a significant flow of exchanges took place between Britain and the PRC, involving different sectors of the British society (intellectuals, businessmen, etc.), some of which were convinced that Britain still had an independent role to play in the world.¹⁵

Youth exchanges were part and parcel of China's international outreach activities. Although different organisations were involved in China's external youth activities, the CYL maintained a leading and supervising role in the entire process. The leading agency in charge of youth foreign affairs was the

14 Liu Gengyin 刘庚寅, "Minjian waijiao sishi nian" 民间外交四十年 [Forty years of people's diplomacy], in *Xin Zhongguo waijiao fengyun* 新中国外交风云 [Winds and clouds in new China's diplomacy] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1999), 5: 201–202.

15 On cultural and economic ties between China and Western European countries see Laura De Giorgi, 'Alle radici della diplomazia culturale cinese: l'interesse per l'Europa occidentale negli anni Cinquanta' and Valeria Zanier, 'Il commercio tra Cina e Europa negli anni della Guerra fredda: strategie e obiettivi', in *La Cina di Mao, l'Italia e l'Europa negli anni della Guerra Fredda*, edited by Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Guido Samarani (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014), 119–146 and 289–324 respectively; Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy* (Praeger: New York, 1963). On Sino-Italian relations, see, among others, Guido Samarani and Laura De Giorgi, *Lontane, vicine. Le relazioni fra Italia e Cina nel Novecento* (Roma: Carocci, 2011). On the British experience see for instance Patrick Wright, *Passport to Peking: A Very British Mission to Mao's China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Tom Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Robert Boardman, *Britain and the People's Republic of China, 1949–74* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1976); Shao Wenguang, *China, Britain and Businessmen: Political and Commercial Relations, 1949–57* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991); Mark Chi-kwan, *The Everyday Cold War: Britain and China, 1950–1972* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

International Liaison Department (*guoji lianluobu*) of the CYL Central Committee. This committee was subordinated to the CCP and its powerful External Liaison Department (*duiwai lianluobu*), which by 1953 included a specific leading group (*guoji huodong zhidao weiyuanhui*) in charge of supervising international people-to-people activities carried out by mass and people's associations (including the Labour Union, the Women's Federation and the CYL).¹⁶ The top cadres of the All-China Youth Federation, All-China Students Federation and the CYL often overlapped, and this was not by chance. For instance, in the second half of the 1950s, Liu Xiyuan was both a member of the Central Secretariat of the CYL and the President of the All-China Youth Federation. Liao Chengzhi, a well-known figure in the realm of Sino-Japanese relations, overseas Chinese affairs and peace movements, was also heavily engaged in the youth movement in the early and mid-1950s, occupying a high position in the executive bodies of both the NDYL and the All-China Youth Federation.¹⁷

At the time of China's relative international isolation, youth organisations contributed to the country's cultural and political outreach in different parts of the world. In the words of former cadre Liu Xiyuan, their mission at the domestic level was to 'educate, guide and unite young people from all walks of life around the party' to mobilise them in the struggle for socialism. At the international level, official youth groups were responsible for 'building good relations with youth and student organizations in the world and develop people's diplomacy so as to break the imperialist blockade against China and let the whole world understand the new China, and sympathize with and support the righteous cause of the Chinese people'.¹⁸ Cadres were often reminded of

16 Zhang Xiangshan 张香山, "Sishi nian de licheng" 四十年的历程 [The forty year historical course], in Zhonggong Zhongyang duiwai lianluobu 中共中央对外联络部和 Zhonggong duiwai guanxi shiliao bianji xiaozu 中共对外关系史料编辑小组, eds., *Zhonglianbu sishi nian* [Forty years of the CCP External Liaison Department] (Beijing: Renmin huabao she, 1992): 13; Dang'an chu 档案处, "Jigou gaige yu gongzuo bianhua" 机构改革与工作变化 (Organizational change and work adjustment), in Zhonggong Zhongyang duiwai lianluobu and Zhonggong duiwai guanxi shiliao bianji xiaozu, eds., *Zhonglianbu sishi nian*, 37.

17 See Zhonggong Zhongyang zuzhibu 中共中央组织部, Zhonggong Zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi 中共中央党史研究室 and Zhongyang dang'an guan 中央档案馆, *Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao, 1921-1997* 中国共产党组织史资料 1921-1997 [Historical material on the CCP organization], vol. 19 (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2000): 20, 22 and the list of names of Presidents, Deputy Presidents and Secretary-Generals of the All-China Youth Federation available at <http://vweb.youth.cn/cms/2006/qlwx/ywb/abo/200605/t20060525_326627.htm>.

18 Liu Xiyuan 刘西元, "Lu Zhongguo qingnian daibiaotuan shouci fangwen Riben de huiyi," 率中国青年代表团首次访问日本的回忆 [Remembering my experience as the head of the first Chinese youth delegation that visited Japan] in Gongqingtuan Zhongyang

the fact that 'foreign affairs are no small matter' (*waishi wu xiaoshi*); an expression which clearly suggests that the involvement of the youth in the country's international affairs had significant political and propaganda purposes.¹⁹

Moreover, for Chinese CYL cadres, being involved in youth foreign affairs meant that they could obtain experience at the international level at an early stage of their career. Many of those involved in external work in the 1950s would continue their career in the future within the Party and the government apparatus. At the same time, their early experience in youth foreign affairs would help establish personal contacts with foreign youth leaders, which would turn into enduring bonds of friendship, and also lay the foundation for further exchanges in the years to come. For instance, Hu Yaobang was the first secretary of the CYL in the 1950s and vice president of the WFDY before rising to the position of Secretary General of the CCP in the 1980s, while Wu Xueqian was the Chinese representative within the WFDY in 1949–1950 and would later enter the External Liaison Department of the CCP.²⁰ In the 1950s, these CYL leaders had the opportunity to meet with young Italian communists, who would eventually become national-level leaders. Among them, Enrico Berlinguer (Secretary General of the Italian Communist Party from 1972 to 1984) and Bruno Bernini (national deputy and representative of the Italian Parliament at the Council of Europe in the 1970s) are worth mentioning here. These early contacts would prove to be useful years later, when the CCP laid the basis for resuming its relations with the Italian Communist Party after sixteen years of interruption after the end of the Cultural Revolution.²¹ Moreover, the CYL's external work made it possible for the key figures who assumed important positions within the apparatus of Chinese foreign relations to meet with African delegates before the Bandung conference (at a time when CCP contacts with Africans were very scarce and scattered). One of these key figures was Liao Chengzhi, who in the 1950s was heavily engaged in activities carried out within

guoji lianluobu 共青团中央国际联络部, ed., *Wei le shidai youhao. Zhongri qingnian youhao jiaowang huiyilu* 为了世代友好:中日青年友好交往回忆录 [Remembering Sino-Japanese youth friendly contacts] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2011): 2.

19 Tuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 团中央国际联络部, ed., *Ruge suiyue: qingnian waishi gongzuo huiyilu* 如歌岁月:青年外事工作回忆录 [The years like songs: Remembering youth external work] (Beijing: Waiwen chubanshe, 2005), 25 and 43.

20 Zhu Liang 朱良, *Duiwai gongzuo huiyi yu sikao* 对外工作回忆与思考 [Memories and reflections on external work] (Beijing: Dangdai shijie chubanshe, 2012), 123–125.

21 Wang Linjin 王麟进 and Zhu Dacheng 朱达成, "Yi jiu qi jiu nian wo dang yu yigong neibu jiechu de qianqian houhou" 一九七九年我党与意共内部接触的前前后后 [Around the 1979's internal contacts between the CCP and the Italian Communist Party], in Zhonggong Zhongyang duiwai lianluobu and Zhonggong duiwai guanxi shiliao bianji xiaozu, eds., *Zhonglianbu sishi nian*, 376–377.

the framework of the WFDY, the World Peace Council and the Afro-Asian Solidarity Council.²² Walter Sisulu, Secretary General of the African National Congress of South Africa, was invited to visit China as early as summer of 1953, soon after an international youth meeting.²³

Many foreign youth delegations visited China in 1953 on the occasion of the second National Congress of the NDYL. In addition to those from socialist countries, foreign delegates also came from Western Europe, e.g. Italy and Great Britain. These early contacts involved foreign youth groups affiliated with national communist parties.²⁴ From then on, the CYL began to broaden its work. Between the end of 1953 and the beginning of 1954, the organisational structure related to *qingnian waishi* was formalised, and external work started to focus on strengthening the role of China within international 'front' youth organisations and developing relations with the youth from socialist countries. According to the official biography of Hu Yaobang, three years later, early in 1956, the issue of international activities was discussed by the central secretariat of the CYL. Hu Yaobang called for enhancing international cooperation and making as many invitations as possible to capitalist countries, focusing on establishing individual links to outstanding and upper-level individuals in these countries.²⁵ This issue probably fell within the context of a political relaxation at the domestic level that had its climax in the intellectual liberalisation known as the 'Hundred Flowers' movement.²⁶

In the 1950s, the PRC became the destination of many visiting youth delegations; in fact, the number greatly surpassed that of outgoing Chinese delegations between 1953 and 1957.²⁷ The Wuhan Communist Youth League

22 Kurt Werner Radtke, *China's Relations with Japan, 1945–83: The Role of Liao Chengzhi* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 92–94.

23 Bruce Larkin, *China and Africa: The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China, 1949–1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 15; David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 32.

24 Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu 共青团中央国际联络部, *Zhongguo qingnian waishi dashiji 1949–1999* 中国青年外事大事记 1949–1999 [Chronicle of events related to China's youth foreign affairs, 1949–1999] (Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 2000), 7–10.

25 Zhang Liqun 张黎群, Zhang Ding 张定, Yan Ruping 严如平, Tang Fei 唐非 and Li Gongtian 李公天, *Hu Yaobang zhuan, di yi juan (1915–1976)* 胡耀邦传 第一卷 1915–1976 [Biography of Hu Yaobang 1915–1976] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe—Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2005), 281.

26 The 'hundred flowers' movement officially begun in May 1956 and lasted almost one year, reaching its apex in May 1957. On the 'hundred flowers' movement see, for instance, Roderrick MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960).

27 Hu Yaobang's report to the Third National Congress of the Communist Youth League (1957), in Zheng Zhongbing 郑仲兵, ed., *Hu Yaobang nianpu ziliao changbian* 胡耀邦

Municipal Committee, for instance, received 316 foreign youth delegations in 1951–1966, with an average of twenty delegations per year. The total number of young people who passed through Wuhan was 2,431, among which 313 (sixty-eight delegations) came from twenty European countries as representatives of different political groups. Among them, a large number came from countries that had not established diplomatic relations with Socialist China.²⁸ Available data on Western Europe show that between 1950 and 1960, around twenty youth exchanges (mutual visits and delegations) occurred between China and France, Great Britain, and Italy.²⁹

Japan was also a target of Chinese youth international outreach activities. Similar to the three Western countries mentioned above, Japan was bound to the United States. With the outbreak of the Cold War, Washington wished to turn Japan into an ally in the Cold War in East Asia, and in 1951 concluded a security treaty, which ensured Japan's dependence on the United States.³⁰ However, the alliance with the United States did not prevent Japan from establishing extensive economic and political ties with Socialist China. To get around the lack of diplomatic recognition, the PRC welcomed the development of various contacts with Japan as part of a broader effort to create links with Japanese civil society actors and encourage the Japanese to renounce their security ties with the United States. Excluding the Soviet Union, in the 1950s (at least up until 1958) Japan had a larger volume of exchanges with the PRC than any other nation in the world (communist or non-communist). This phenomenon should be understood against the backdrop of the complex post-war situation, where a widespread sense of guilt towards China among the masses intertwined with a reaction by wider sectors of Japanese society against the American presence in Japan and its restriction on trade with the PRC.³¹

On the occasion of a WFDY council held in Beijing in 1954, early contacts were established between Chinese youth delegates and the vice president of the Council of Japanese Youth Organisations (Juro Suzuki), the largest youth organisation in Japan that included a great number of rural youth striving

年谱资料长编 [A chronological record of Hu Yaobang's life] (Hong Kong: Shidai guoji chuban youxian gongsi, 2005), 1: 168.

28 Li Shaoming 李少明, "Wo canjia qingnian waijiao jiedai gongzuo de huiyi" 我参加青年外交接待工作的回忆 [Remembering my participation in receiving young foreign guests], *Wuhan wenshi ziliao* 7 (2012): 15.

29 Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Zhongguo qingnian waishi dashiji*, 2–26.

30 For a comprehensive account and analysis, see Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York: Public Affairs, Perseus Books, 2007), 241–277.

31 Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy*, 41–44; Utpal Vyas, *Soft Power in Japan-China relations. State, sub-state and non-state relations* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

against the occupation of American troops.³² In 1956, the first Japanese youth delegation comprising the representatives of the above-mentioned association visited China upon the invitation of the president of the ACYF Liao Chengzhi,³³ despite initial obstruction by the Japanese government.³⁴ The following year, the PRC sent its first youth delegation to Japan led by Liu Xiyuan and Wu Xueqian.³⁵ Based on these early contacts, a large-scale exchange with the co-operation of the Japan-China Friendship Association was organised in the mid-1960s.³⁶

Thus, in the 1950s, China's Youth League played an important role in promoting and managing external contacts with youth beyond the realm of socialist diplomacy. The flow of exchanges with youth from capitalist countries served to build an informal network of personal ties outside the government spheres. This network was designed to enhance relations among 'the people' and to forge a foreign public opinion favourably disposed towards Socialist China.

4 PRC Engagement with Soviet-dependent International Youth Organisations

The WFDY and the International Union of Students (IUS) provided the newly established PRC with privileged avenues for exchanges and contacts beyond the socialist bloc. Chinese youth organisations had representatives within both the WFDY and the IUS up until the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, when the PRC withdrew its delegates because of the Sino-Soviet dispute and the crisis of the world communist movement.³⁷

32 Yang Zhenya 杨振亚, "Kaituo ZhongRi qingnian youhao wanglai de daolu" 开拓中日青年友好往来的道路 [Developing Sino-Japanese youth friendly exchange], in Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Weile Shidai youhao*, 6–12. On the Japanese participation in the 1954 Council of the WFDY see, WFDY, *Council of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, Peking 9–15 August 1954*, 47.

33 Yang Zhenya, "Kaituo ZhongRi qingnian youhao", 7.

34 Wen Chi 文迟, "Huiyi wo suo jingli de yu Riben qingnian zuzhi de jiaowang huodong" 回忆我所经历的与日本青年组织的交往活动 (My experience in the exchanges with Japanese youth organizations), in Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Weile Shidai youhao*, 13–14.

35 Yang Zhenya, "Kaituo ZhongRi qingnian youhao", 8–9; Liu Xiyuan, "Lu Zhongguo qingnian daibiaotuan", 2–5.

36 "Ribn qingniantuan xieyihui daibiaotuan" 日本青年协议会代表团 [The delegation of the Council of Japanese Youth Organizations], May 9 and 10, 1960, Shanghai Municipal Archives, file n. C21-2-3136. Wen Chi, "Huiyi wo suo jingli de yu Riben qingnian zuzhi de jiaowang huodong", 14–15.

37 See recently published memoirs: Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu 共青团中央国际联络部, ed., *Budapeisi de huiyi. Canyu shijie minzhu qingnian lianmeng ershiyi*

Both the WFDY and the IUS were born out of the desire for peace soon after the end of the Second World War. The WFDY was officially founded in London in 1945 with the aim of establishing international youth cooperation for the cause of freedom, democracy and equality. However, after 1947, the communists consolidated their control over the organisation, which eventually became subordinated to the Soviet propaganda machine. Thus, the WFDY soon developed into a Soviet-dependent 'front organisation' with a partisan character, and the non-communist groups quickly withdrew from the organisation. The IUS, founded in 1946 in Prague, experienced a similar fate.³⁸

By the early 1950s, the WFDY had become a large organisation with a transnational character: its membership grew from thirty million young people representing sixty-five countries in 1945 to eighty-three million young people from ninety countries in 1953.³⁹ Nevertheless, despite being a 'front organisation' highly dependent on the Soviet Union, it did represent a bridge between East and West, a place where young people from countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain could come together and meet representatives of the Third World. The biannual 'World Festival of Youth and Students for peace and friendship' (hereafter World Youth Festival), a key event in the Soviet-sponsored campaign for peace, is the most prominent example in this respect.⁴⁰

As the Soviets managed to control the WFDY fully, all members of the Secretariat were communists, with Italians and French – as representatives of the largest communist parties in Western Europe – taking on a prominent role in key bodies. At the same time, China's weight in the WFDY gradually increased after the end of the Korean War when the Chinese delegates entered the Secretariat. This event happened in the summer of 1953, when the Third World Youth Congress held in Bucharest elected Hu Yaobang as vice president and

nian (1945–1966) 布达佩斯的回忆：参与世界民主青年联盟二十一年 (1945–1966) [Memories from Budapest: Participation in the World Federation of Democratic Youth, 1945–1966] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2009); Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu 共青团中央国际联络部, ed., *Bulage de huiyi. Canyu guoji xuelian gongzuo ershi nian (1947–1966)* 布拉格的回忆：参与国际学联工作二十年 (1947–1966) [Memories from Prague: Participation in the International Union of Students, 1947–1966] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2008).

38 Richard Cornell, *Youth and Communism. An Analysis of International Communist Youth Movements* (New York: Walker and Company, 1965), 73–95; see also Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 63–167; Philip G. Altbach, 'The International Student Movement', *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, 1 (1970): 156–174.

39 WFDY, *For Peace and Friendship, Bucharest, 25th–30th July, 1953*, 291.

40 See for instance Pia Koivunen, 'Overcoming Cold War Boundaries at the World Youth Festivals', in *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, edited by S. Autio-Sarasmo, and K. Miklossy (London-New York: Routledge, 2011) and Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 189–191.

Qian Liren as secretary.⁴¹ Qian Liren's election was an attempt by the WFDY that year to enlarge the Secretariat, which was then dominated by European representatives at a time when attention towards supporting anti-colonial movements was increasing. In fact, the election came as a result of the requests from the WFDY for the PRC to send a delegate. The CYL International Liaison department eventually asked the CCP's authorisation to send a representative in order to enhance China's international position. The CCP Central Committee agreed, and Qian Liren, who at that time was active as a leader in the CYL Shanghai Committee in charge of student activities, was chosen as the most suitable person. In the autumn of 1953, he moved to Budapest where he worked until September 1956.⁴²

On 27 July 1953, on the same day the fighting in Korea ended, Hu Yaobang delivered a speech to the delegates of the Third World Youth Congress. He praised the construction of the 'new China' and stated that China was committed to peace, friendship and solidarity among the young of the whole world: 'We hold that all countries of different social systems can coexist peacefully. [...] We are convinced that it is completely possible for all young people, irrespective of nationality, social strata, religious belief, political opinion and affiliation, to find common language and common ideas in the common cause of defending peace.'⁴³ By emphasising peace as a common aspiration of the youth, Hu Yaobang presented the PRC as a non-confrontational state keen to build bridges across the blocs.

One year later, in August 1954, the PRC hosted the WFDY Council, and it was the first time that a WFDY Council was held in Asia. Making the PRC the host was a choice that was mainly due to recent developments in national liberation movements in colonial countries and to the Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina, which had recently brought Asian countries to the centre of world attention and had greatly enhanced the international standing of the 'new China'.⁴⁴ This meeting involved not only plenary sessions but also mass rallies and get-togethers, calling for peace and the easing of international tension, the strengthening of the world youth's struggle and unity against colonialism

41 Qian Liren 钱李仁, "Shijie minzhu qingnian lianmeng huiyilu" 世界民主青年联盟回忆录 [Memories from the World Federation of Democratic Youth], in Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Budapeisi de huiyi*, 95–106.

42 Qian Liren, "Wo congshi qingnian gongzuo de huiyi" 我从事青年工作的回忆 [Recalling the time I was engaged in the youth work], in Li Yuqi 李玉奇, ed., *Qingyun chunqiu. Di er ji* 青春春秋 第二集 [The history of the youth movement, vol. 2] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2005), 52–53.

43 Quoted in: *For Peace and Friendship* 1953, 137–138.

44 Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Budapeisi de huiyi*, 36–37.

for national independence and the improvement of the living conditions of the youth of newly independent countries in the Third World.⁴⁵ The place and agenda of the meeting also reflected the WFDY's attempt to give greater attention to extra-European countries in its work.⁴⁶

In fact, the Italian communist Bruno Bernini, then President of the WFDY, addressed the question of the specific characteristics of the youth in colonial and semi-colonial countries, a point then elaborated upon by the Chinese delegate Liu Daosheng.⁴⁷ Bernini stated that the establishment of the PRC had been a fact of historical importance: a 'shock for the colonialist world'.⁴⁸ In the opening speech entitled 'Chinese youth and world youth forever friends', Hu Yaobang defined the topic under discussion (i.e., the youth movement in colonial countries) as 'extremely important and urgent', and renewed his call to achieve unity among the youth who wanted a peaceful future. Three years later, in 1957, at the Fourth Congress of the WFDY, Hu Yaobang stressed the principle of 'seeking common ground while accepting existing differences' as the basis of peaceful cooperation among the WFDY, the youth with different political opinions and various national youth groups.⁴⁹

With the unfolding of the crisis of the world communist movement, international youth organisations developed into two of the outposts of the political struggle between the Chinese and Soviet Communist Parties. After the twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party held in 1956, divergences started to emerge between Chinese and Soviet representatives within both the IUS and the WFDY.⁵⁰ It should be noted that despite such organisations being under the control of the Soviet Communist Party, the CCP attempted to operate independently even during the early 1950s.⁵¹ Bernini played an important role in the mid-1950s in pursuing the new moderate policy aimed at broadening the WFDY collaboration with non-communist political forces. He worked side by side with Hu Yaobang and Qian Liren at the time China was giving

45 See WFDY, *Council of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, Peking 9–15 August 1954*.

46 Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Budapeisi de huiyi*, 6.

47 WFDY, *Council of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, Peking 9–15 August 1954*, Budapest, 'World Youth' Magazine, 18–20.

48 Ibid., 8.

49 Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦, "Shijie ge guo qingnian youhao hezuo de xin jieduan" 世界各国青年友好合作的新阶段 [A new phase of cooperation and friendship among youth from every country of the world], *Renmin Ribao* (1 September, 1957), 6.

50 Divergences on the theme of peace emerged as early as 1958 at a IUS meeting held in Beijing [Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Bulage de huiyi*, 99–100].

51 Cheng Jiming 程极明, "Huiyi zai guoji xuelian gongzuo de san nian" 回忆在国际学联工作的三年 [Remembering three years of experience working in the International Union of Students], in Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Bulage de huiyi*, 213–214.

increasing attention to the colonial issue and to Asian and African countries. Bernini personally witnessed China assuming a more active and autonomous role within the WFDY as well as emerging disagreements between Chinese and Soviet representatives over issues such as the priorities of the youth of the Third World.⁵² Chinese and Soviet positions on the colonial issue and national independence movements soon diverged and resulted in open antagonism and conflict in the early 1960s. The Chinese emphasised an active struggle for national liberation and attacked the Soviet representatives for prioritising disarmament as a way to achieve national independence and to remove imperialist and neo-colonialist dominance.⁵³

However, before the Sino–Soviet dispute unfolded, international youth organisations provided China with opportunities to increase its cultural contacts and project a peaceful image globally. Large-scale transnational conventions and get-togethers sponsored by the WFDY and the IUS, such as the World Youth Festivals, were important in this respect. According to Qian Liren's recollection, the PRC used these meetings to expand contacts with representatives from every part of the world, and numerous foreign delegations were invited to China after each convention. For example, 452 young people from thirty-four countries visited China in 1953 after the World Youth Festival in the same year.⁵⁴

The largest and most impressive Festival was held in Moscow in 1957. It was conceived by the new post-Stalin Soviet leadership as an important opportunity to propagate a new peaceful image of the USSR internationally. The event was attended by 34,000 young people from 131 countries and saw the participation of an unprecedented number of non-communist Westerners.⁵⁵ The PRC participated with a 1,222-member delegation, the largest ever to attend this kind of public celebration. It was particularly active in conducting external propaganda and in establishing contacts with the representatives of various national organisations through bilateral meetings. The Chinese delegation presented artistic performances, talked about peaceful and friendly

52 Autobiographical manuscript, Bruno Bernini's Archival Fund, Livorno Historical Institute of Resistance and Contemporary Society (from now on ISTORECO).

53 Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 97–135. On the Sino-Soviet competition for attracting newly independent states in the Third World see, Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

54 Qian Liren, "Wo congshi qingnian gongzuo de huiyi", 55

55 Pia Koivunen, 'The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: propagating a new, peaceful image of the Soviet Union', in *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, edited by Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (New York: Routledge, 2009), 52; WFDY, *VIth World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship*, Moscow, July 28th–August 11th, 1957, 25.

aspirations, exchanged ideas on common problems encountered by young people, introduced achievements in the construction of Socialist China and showed their support for the anti-colonial struggle and defence of national independence to the delegations from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.⁵⁶ The general task assigned to the delegation was broad and multi-faceted, encompassing the consolidation of China's unity with the socialist countries, the support of the youth from newly independent and colonial countries and the expansion of friendship with youths from capitalist countries. Zhu Liang was instructed by Chinese leaders to investigate the composition of foreign delegations that could be invited to China later on.⁵⁷ Consequently, in September 1957, nearly 900 young people and students from more than thirty countries who had taken part in the Moscow celebration were invited to visit the PRC. Among them, a large group of young Americans (including students, workers, journalists and cultural personalities) went to China despite opposition from the US government⁵⁸ and were received by Zhou Enlai, who called them 'the pioneers in opening the contacts between the people of the two countries'.⁵⁹ These initiatives clearly fell within China's broader outward strategies aimed at making contacts with prominent foreign individuals and presenting the PRC as a country open to, and supporting exchanges with, the people of all nations regardless of the position of their own governments.

5 The 1956 International Youth Delegation to Socialist China

In the mid-1950s, at a time of relative peace and stability for China, attempts to search for a more autonomous role internationally and to expand its foreign relations beyond the socialist bloc were undertaken. A spectacular increase in the number of foreign delegations from the non-communist countries that reached Beijing proved China's renewed openness to the outside world.⁶⁰ These exchanges were important in the attempts by China to influence foreign

56 Zhu Liang, *Duiwai gongzuo huiyi*, 18–21; Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Buda-peisi de huiyi*, 44–47.

57 Zhu Liang, *Duiwai gongzuo huiyi*, 17–18.

58 See Max Frankel, '41 defy warning, set off for China: Americans in Moscow insist on their "right to travel"', *New York Times*, August 14, 1957 (online at <http://radfilms.com/1957_forbidden_journey_ny_times.htm>).

59 "Zhou zongli jiejian Meiguo qingnian daibiaotuan de tanhua jilu," 周总理接见美国青年代表团的谈话记录 [Minutes of Zhou Enlai's talk to the American youth delegation], *Zhongguo qingnian* 20 (1957): 1–5.

60 According to Passin, more than 435 delegations from the non-communist world reached Beijing in 1956 alone [Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy*, 2].

public opinion, as visitors were expected to become conduits of the Chinese people's diplomacy and propaganda once they were back in their own country, by producing publications that contributed to disseminating a positive image of the PRC abroad.⁶¹

In November 1956, an international youth delegation visited the PRC because of the mutual cooperation between China and the WFDY.⁶² The delegation consisted not only of communist members, but also involved young people who did not participate in any political movement, and members of various youth groups external to the WFDY. The majority of these young people assembled in Prague and then travelled to Beijing under the invitation of the Chinese government. According to Chinese sources, the delegation was composed of thirty-three foreign representatives of youth organisations from eighteen different countries, the majority of whom were not affiliated with the WFDY. Aside from a few Asian-African youth groups (i.e., from Indonesia, Egypt and Sudan), there were representatives of Western European and Japanese youth organisations. They included youths affiliated with Socialist parties in Belgium and Italy as well as with national and international Christian youth associations, who were curious to visit the PRC.⁶³ Among those who attended were a young Australian from an evangelical movement (Henry Crabb); a Swedish priest; a Danish journalist; three YMCA officials from Sweden, West Germany and England; and four communist European delegates from Italy, Hungary, East Germany and France. The Italian delegate was Bruno Bernini, president of the WFDY. The representatives of Great Britain included the founder of the National Youth Theatre, Michael Croft, who later defined the delegation as 'a major prestige effort, [...] to gather under one roof "all shades of religious and political opinion"'.⁶⁴

The initiative took place at a time when China was experiencing a period of political relaxation internally and fell within the context of a new policy line both the IUS and the WFDY had started to pursue since the death of Stalin. The main purpose was to present themselves as non-political movements with the aim of increasing their influence. Thus, efforts were undertaken to move

61 See for instance Laura De Giorgi, 'Alle radici della diplomazia culturale cinese'; Anne Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003) and Julia Lovell, 'The Uses of Foreigners in Mao-era China'.

62 Qian Liren, "Wo congshi qingnian gongzuo de huiyi," 65–66.

63 Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Budapeisi de huiyi*, 42–43.

64 Michael Croft, *Red Carpet to China* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1958), 8 and 13. According to Croft, among the members of the British delegation there was a female tennis player named Muriel.

to becoming a more pluralistic and representative organisation, especially in light of profound international changes, such as accelerated decolonisation and the emergence of newly independent countries in the developing world.⁶⁵ For China, the initiative was undoubtedly a great opportunity in its efforts to impress Western delegates with its achievements in the construction of socialism, to make them appreciate its weight and importance as a world power and to show the human side of the Communist regime. At a time when communist countries were experiencing the dramatic effects of de-Stalinisation, particular attention was indeed given to those delegates who tended to equate communism with oppression and limited freedom.⁶⁶ This visit also paved the way for further contacts the following year, as was exemplified by two Chinese youth delegations that travelled to Italy on the occasion of the national congresses of both the Italian Communist Youth Federation and the Italian Socialist Youth Movement,⁶⁷ as well as by a Chinese youth delegation that spent a month in England at the invitation of the Britain–China Friendship Association.⁶⁸

Michael Croft was invited 'out of the blue' to join the delegation, and he accepted the invitation despite not being politically committed and knowing nothing about China: 'I had never been a delegate to anything and did not relish the idea of moving about in a supervised party; on the other hand, the red carpet had its appeal, for I had never travelled this way before.'⁶⁹ His invitation was probably part of the broader attempt being carried out at that time by the Chinese government to win the sympathy of politically indifferent cultural personalities from Britain and to forge the idea of differentiating of British public attitudes from those of the United States.⁷⁰ Upon arrival in Beijing, Croft clearly gained the impression that the 'delegation business' was 'a major development in the Chinese campaign to win friends and influence people'. Peking housed many foreign delegates, including various delegations from Japan, Pakistan, India, Norway, France, Singapore, Italy, Hong Kong and Finland, aside from innumerable delegations from the Soviet Union and its allies. Croft clearly perceived this business as a 'national advertising' effort driven by China's desire to be seen in the world as a respectable country.⁷¹

The international youth delegation's tour covered Beijing, Manchuria, Tianjin, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Canton. The young delegates were invited

65 Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, ch. 4.

66 Gongqingtuan Zhongyang guoji lianluobu, *Budapeisi de huiyi*, 43.

67 Sofia Graziani, 'The Case of Youth Exchanges', 211–214.

68 Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy*, 77–78.

69 Michael Croft, *Red Carpet to China*, 2.

70 Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy*, 77.

71 Michael Croft, *Red Carpet to China*, 38–39.

on carefully planned tours, during which nothing was left to chance in providing for the delegates' wants and needs. The Chinese did their best to meet everyone's wishes albeit within predefined limits. However, doing this with such a heterogeneous delegation was not easy, as everyone wanted different things. Michael Croft himself was rather disappointed by the travel plans, which did not always meet his expectations, as he became bored during guided tours aimed at showing the great industrial programme and production achievements. He preferred to get around on his own: 'The desire of the hosts to ensure that every delegate crammed the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of national achievements conflicted insuperably with individual predilections'.⁷²

His personal perception as a Westerner from a capitalist country in Socialist China mirrored the contradictions of China's relationships with the outside world during the Cold War. He was positively stunned by the material progress of the country, but his perception was also damaged by the highly controlled environment, the extent of communist penetration in society, the lack of freedom and the illiberal methods he witnessed. Under the background of these negative impressions, the Hungarian crisis broke out during the visit, shocked the world and projected a negative image of the Soviet Union worldwide. This event heavily influenced Croft's views of Chinese leaders' approach and the government policy (support for Soviet repression and the lack of information on the crisis in the domestic press).

Upon their return to Beijing, Deng Xiaoping, then Secretary General of the CCP, met and talked to the delegation members. Michael Croft asked two main questions in his meeting with Deng, bringing up disputable topics over which he did not get satisfactory answers. Aside from the question about the Chinese government's policy towards Hungary and Egypt (the Suez crisis also unfolded during the delegation's visit to China), he enquired about how Chinese leaders interpreted the concept of freedom of the press. Deng Xiaoping replied that political viewpoints should not damage mutual friendship and that what is published in the press should not impair relations between countries, as each country should be free to choose its own methods.⁷³ According to Bruno Bernini's account, Deng Xiaoping attempted to convey the message that the Chinese government's international commitment was aimed at developing collaboration and exchanges with every country to overcome prejudice and build world peace.⁷⁴

Unlike Michael Croft, Bruno Bernini was a political personality, a Communist party member, and his experience in China was thus embedded in a whole

⁷² Ibid., 45.

⁷³ Ibid., 256.

⁷⁴ Autobiographical manuscript, Bruno Bernini's Archival Fund, ISTORECO, 88.

framework of commitment to the communist movement. His role as president of the WEDY allowed him to gain crucial insights into Chinese leaders' approach to and conception of international relations. Although both Croft and Bernini were impressed by the enormity of the task the Chinese had undertaken for building the 'new China', their individual experiences of the journey led to a different understanding and perception of Socialist China. Despite being critical of Chinese methods and policies, Croft's account provides a significant picture of a rising nation, the people of which were being moulded towards a future of great power status. Moreover, it reminded Western readers of the importance of the PRC and conveyed a feeling of fear for a possible hegemonic role for China (and communism) in Asia at the same time: 'Distance has not prevented China from emerging, within a few years, into a world power of the first magnitude and ultimately, I believe, unless we do some rapid re-thinking on the political and economic fronts, it will not prevent China, still firmly allied to the Soviet Union, from gaining effective control over most of Asia'.⁷⁵

Conversely, Bernini fully realised the importance of the PRC as a force for peaceful international change. As he put it, 'From those travels in China, from the unforgettable experiences I had [...] I became convinced [...] of the important contribution that the New China would make to the development of new relations of international collaboration and, especially, between the industrialised North and the Countries of the Third World, crucial for both the progress of the peoples and of world peace'.⁷⁶

Croft and Bernini, albeit from different perspectives, thus approached Socialist China and gained various impressions and understandings of the country's development and policies. At the same time, this short-term sojourn in China convinced both of them that the PRC was a rising country which had a role to play in the world.

6 Conclusion

In the context of the relative peace and stability that followed the Korean War, the Chinese government embarked on a vigorous programme of people-to-people diplomacy to create informal channels between China and Western Europe. This chapter has shown that the CYL played a prominent role not only at the domestic level, but also within the framework of China's people-to-people diplomacy and political outreach activities, as it served as a tool for the realisation of both the CCP's goals and the country's national interests. The

⁷⁵ Michael Croft, *Red Carpet to China*, author's note, vii–viii.

⁷⁶ Autobiographical manuscript, Bruno Bernini's Archival Fund, ISTORECO, 88.

Youth League's participation in left-wing international youth organisations provided the PRC with a privileged avenue of exchanges and socio-political dialogue with groups and individuals from non-communist European countries at the time when the Cold War logic heavily limited China's external relations and its global reach. At the same time, such organisations provided a crucial platform for promoting a peaceful and friendly image of China globally.

The PRC's activism in international organisations increased and new opportunities for building links to Western European youth emerged in the mid-1950s, when China adopted a soft and cooperative line at the international level. The international youth delegation to China in 1956 is a case in point in this respect. Taking advantage of the WFDY's new moderate policy of broadening its influence among non-communist youth, the PRC invited a heterogeneous international youth delegation in the hope of winning the sympathy of non-communist youth representatives and ideally of forging a friendly popular atmosphere towards China in their home countries. Representatives such as Croft and Bernini actually confronted a rising China whose implications for the rest of the world could not be underestimated. Evaluating the net effect of these exchanges is difficult. However, it seems clear that early contacts among young personalities from Western European countries were designed to forge a perception of China as a respectable country, to create a feeling of normalcy in the relations of China with Western European countries and to reduce political hostility.

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History and Memory: Italian Communists' Views of the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC During the Early Cold War*

Guido Samarani

1 Introduction*

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was one of the main actors (together with the Italian Socialist Party) involved in the unconventional, sub-state party-to-party diplomacy between Italy and the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the presence in Italy of the largest Communist party in Western Europe undoubtedly acted as an important channel for Sino-Italian unofficial exchanges. Besides conducting a pro-China campaign through the official party press and in parliament, the PCI was particularly active in awakening its members, as well as the public, to what was going on in China. This awareness was cultivated through the promotion and coordination of various initiatives, including, for instance, the organization of cultural and scientific delegations to Red China. During the early 1950s, a few Italian communists had the opportunity to reside and work in the PRC.

Political relations between the Italian and the Chinese communist parties were inevitably influenced by the developments taking place within the world communist movement. Indeed, up until 1957, positive relations continued to develop, largely based on solidarity and similarity of political evaluations of general questions regarding the international communist movement. The Italian communists' appreciation of the Chinese revolution mainly stemmed from the way the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders defended their autonomy and sought distinctive features in their revolutionary action. On this aspect, Giancarlo Pajetta (1911–1990) – one of the leading members of the PCI at that time – would later state: 'The peculiarities of the Chinese revolution, its weight

* Within this paper, translations into English from the original Italian texts are those of the author.

within the world proletarian and revolutionary movement, and the problem of the autonomy of the party that guided that revolution were questions beyond dispute.¹

In fact, the Italian communists' attention to and appreciation for the distinctive features of the Chinese revolution at that time was a positive judgement on the merits as well as the method, considering Palmiro Togliatti's (1893–1964)² commitment to set the so-called *via italiana al socialismo* ('Italian way to socialism'), at the core of the PCI renewal in the mid-1950s. It was in the wake of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1956 – which sanctioned the thesis of the plurality and diversity of the roads to socialism and opened up new opportunities for communist parties' autonomy – that the PCI leaders began to search for a more autonomous role within the international communist movement. As Alexander Höbel put it: 'The strongest communist party in the capitalist world could become itself an *international political subject*'.³

With a perspective aimed at overcoming military blocs, and firmly anchored in the strategy of peaceful coexistence, Togliatti tried to substantiate his desire to carve out a more autonomous space of action vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, by elaborating a new original conception based on 'polycentrism'. This perspective implied a re-assessment of the traditional leadership role of the Soviet Union within the communist movement and also led to the PCI's interest and action towards the extra-European world, and what came to be known as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

This chapter is articulated in two main parts. The first part proposes a tentative periodization on the history of bilateral relations between the PCI and the CCP from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s; the second part presents an analysis of the PCI's views of and approach to the CCP and to People's China, relying mainly on documents, writings and memories by several PCI leaders.

1 Giancarlo Pajetta, 'Come il Pci ha guardato alla rivoluzione cinese' [How the PCI has looked at the Chinese revolution], in *Rinascita*, no. 37 (September 1976): pp. 7–9 (quotation at p. 7).

2 Togliatti had been the National Secretary of the PCI from 1927, holding this position until his death in 1964.

3 Alexander Höbel, 'Il PCI nella crisi del movimento comunista internazionale tra PCUS e PCC (1960–1964)' [The PCI in the Crisis of the International Communist Movement Between the CPSU and the CCP, 1960–1964], *Studi Storici* 46, no. 2 (2005): pp. 515–572 (quotation at p. 516); see also Silvio Pons, *La rivoluzione globale. Storia del comunismo internazionale 1917–1991* [The Global Revolution. A History of International Communism 1917–1991] (Torino: Einaudi, 2012).

2 The P CI and the CCP : a Tentative Periodization of Bilateral Relations and Exchanges (Mid-1950s-early 1960s)

In the early 1950s, the CCP Central Committee set up a specific department, called the International Liaison Department (*Duiwailianluobu* or *Zhonglianbu*), that was responsible for the CCP's external work under the direction of Wang Jiaxiang (1906–1974), who headed the Department until 1966. The department's main task was to establish contacts with the communist parties in the socialist countries, thereby strengthening the unity of the socialist bloc; however, it also developed relations with other communist parties participating in the international communist movement. The exchange of delegations soon became one of the most important forms of interaction that allowed direct contact among party leaders.⁴

The 1956 national congresses of both the CCP and the P CI provided the occasion for the first exchange of delegations among Italian and Chinese communists. More than fifty foreign delegations were invited to the Chinese Congress, the first to be held after the founding of the P RC. The Italian delegation, composed of Giuliano Pajetta (1915–1988; brother of Gian Carlo), and Davide Lajolo (1912–1984), was headed by Mauro Scoccimarro (1895–1972), who delivered a welcoming speech at the Congress in September 1956 praising the particular features and achievements of the Chinese communist revolution. Thus, from the CCP's historical experience, the Italian Communists probably received confirmation of the principles of the multiplicity of the roads to socialism, and the possibility of a peaceful transition.

Two months later, in December 1956, a CCP delegation was invited to Italy to participate in the 8th Congress of the P CI held in Rome. During the congress, Togliatti took up the theme of the '*via italiana al socialismo*', making it clear that socialism should be realized according to specific national conditions. The Chinese delegation was led by Peng Zhen, then a member of the CCP Politburo and Mayor of Beijing, who was welcomed with exceptional enthusiasm by all Congress delegates. His attitude and style impressed observers, and the P CI's official newspaper, *L'Unità*, defined his tone as eloquent, penetrating, and persuasive. It also depicted Peng Zhen as a participant who never stopped listening with extreme attention to the speakers, showing an absolutely impartial

4 Zhu Liang 朱良, *Duiwai gongzuo huiyi yu sikao* 对外工作会议与思考 [Working in external relations: memoirs and thoughts] (Beijing: Dangshi shijie chubanshe, 2012); *Xin zhongguo waijiao 60 nian* 新中国外交六十年 [Sixty years of New China's diplomacy], edited by Zhao Jinjun (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2010). See also David Shambaugh, 'China's "Quiet Diplomacy": The International Department of the Chinese Communist Party', *China: An International Journal* 5, (March 2007), pp. 26–54, later published in *Critical Readings on the Chinese Communist Party*, edited by Kjeld Erik Brodsgaard (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017), vol. 1.

interest to every topic, and displaying an 'attentive and grave' expression, which was 'always serious and impassive'.⁵

In his speech greeting the Congress, Peng Zhen reminded his audience of the great strength of the PCI, as well as its prominent position within the international communist movement. He praised the revolutionary tradition of the Italian people who, he said, thanks to its strength and unity with other democratic forces, had struggled against fascism and later realized great achievements (the creation of a republic, the elaboration of the constitution and the development of democracy). He then touched upon the issue of world peace at a time of increasing international tension, and stressed the importance of the international unity of the working class. At the end of his speech, he also praised efforts made thus far to establish and extend contacts between Italy and China, and to contribute to mutual understanding and confidence, which in turn would certainly lead to the establishment of diplomatic relations.⁶

This first bilateral exchange of delegations laid the ground for further contacts in the following years. In April 1959, a high-level official PCI delegation travelled to China to promote bilateral exchanges at a time when China's domestic and external policies were radicalizing, distrust and tension between Beijing and Moscow were further deepening, and the implementation of the Great Leap Forward across China was causing tensions within the CCP leadership. It was an important political initiative that allowed Italian communist leaders to observe first-hand some aspects of daily life in China. Invited by the CCP Central Committee, the PCI delegation was led by Giancarlo Pajetta, and composed of national and regional party leaders such as Antonio Roasio (1902–1986), Celso Ghini (1907–1981), Luciano Barca (1920–2012), Maria Michetti (1922–2007), and Gerardo Chiaromonte (1924–1993), along with Giuseppe Boffa (1923–1998), who was in charge of the foreign news services of *L'Unità* and had been a correspondent of the newspaper in Moscow (1953–1958).

The delegation arrived in Beijing on 6 April and stayed in China for nearly a month, travelling to Beijing, Shanghai, Shenyang, Anshan, and other cities and agricultural areas for scheduled visits to factories, large iron and steel industry complexes, people's communes, schools, and cultural and social institutions. It had meetings with CCP leaders at the highest level, in particular with Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, Wang Jiaxiang, Yang Shangkun, Chen Yi, and Liu Ningyi.

5 Arminio Savioli, 'La parola dei delegati dei partiti fratelli alla tribuna dell'VIII Congresso del PCI' [Speeches by the delegates of brother parties at the 8th Congress of the PCI], *L'Unità*, 11 December 1956, p. 8.

6 'Il saluto di Peng Chen' (Peng Zhen's greeting speech), *L'Unità*, 11 December 1956, pp. 8–9.

Later in the same year, a PCI delegation led by Girolamo Li Causi (1896–1977), and composed of four other members including Pietro Secchia (1903–1973) and Salvatore Cacciapuoti (1910–1992), travelled to China to participate in the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. Upon arrival in Beijing, the delegation attended the official ceremony held at the Great Hall of the People, where a warm welcome message from Togliatti was read out. In the message, he praised the CCP's achievements in the struggle for the national and social emancipation of the Chinese people and in the socialist construction. Togliatti also described the successes of the 8th National Congress of the CCP, the Great Leap Forward, and the people's communes as, 'the guarantee that your [CCP] march forward will be increasingly rapid and victorious', and stated that, 'the growing weight of your country is now felt in every aspect of the world's life'.⁷

After the October 1st celebrations, the delegation was asked to attend a confidential meeting, during which all foreign communist party representatives were informed of the current domestic political developments, and especially the recent removal of the Minister of Defence, Peng Dehuai, for criticizing the party's general line and the economic conditions that resulted from the implementation of the Great Leap Forward (GLF). Afterwards, the Italian delegation visited Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, and other minor urban centres, and had meetings and conversations with factory executives, and local labour and political leaders, which gave them the impression that the CCP had complete control over the country's situation and a close and profound relationship with the masses. They were also struck by the enthusiasm they observed in big factories and heavy industry complexes, as well as the patient and tenacious effort the overwhelming majority of the population was making in the construction of roads, dams, and so forth with primitive methods and tools. Obviously, it may seem quite surprising that the delegation did not perceive any sign of the difficult situation in China at that time. However, it must be considered, first of all, that the Chinese tended to present the positive side of the situation to the delegation; and secondly, until the 1980s very little was known about the tragedy of the Great Leap Forward and the famine.⁸

On 13 October, upon their return to Beijing, the delegation met with Liu Shaoqi, then President of the PRC, who, according to the delegation's report, expressed the belief that the general tendency in international relations was

7 Archivi del Partito Comunista Italiano (Archives of the PCI, APCI), Estero, Cina, mf. 0464, 1959, pp. 2971–2972.

8 This question will be dealt with briefly in the second part of this chapter. For an overview of the historiography on the GLF see Felix Wemheuer, 'The Great Leap Forward and the Famine', *Oxford Bibliography in Chinese Studies (online)*, retrieved 16 Apr. 2018, from <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0129.xml>.

toward a détente, and also showed a 'warm interest' toward Togliatti. From the visits and talks, the delegation got the impression that the work done by the delegation led by Giancarlo Pajetta a few months earlier had been appreciated by the Chinese leaders.⁹

The last contact of this type took place in August 1961, when a delegation of the PCI composed of low-ranking politicians was sent to the PRC for a study journey. The delegation travelled throughout China (Beijing, Qingdao, Zhengzhou, Luoyang, Sanmenxia, Shanghai), visiting a few people's communes and modern industrial complexes. This time, the members of the delegation were able to observe, and later report to the PCI centre, the difficult socio-economic conditions of the country, and the extreme poverty in the countryside. Moreover, during meetings and talks, while avoiding discussions about general policy, the Chinese dared to ask insidious questions, suggesting a veiled allusion to the policy of the PCI about war and peace, the peaceful transition to socialism, and so forth.¹⁰

By then, ideological divergences had indeed started to beset relations among communist parties, as was evident at various international meetings held during that period. This was the case, for instance, during the Beijing meeting of the Board of Directors of the World Federation of Trade Unions (June 1960), and the Moscow meeting of 81 communist and workers parties (November 1960), which clearly revealed to the Italians the seriousness of the Sino-Soviet dispute.¹¹

The occasion for a direct and open attack was provided by the 10th Congress of the PCI held in December 1962. It was here that the Chinese delegation, led by Zhao Yimin, at that time Deputy Director of the CCP International Liaison Department, branded the Italian policy (the road to socialism through structural reforms) as 'revisionist', presenting a critique that would soon turn into a public condemnation of the PCI, and especially of its leader Togliatti.¹²

Between December 1962 and March 1963, two articles appeared in China's official party press condemning the Italian party for its alignment with Moscow and for the *via italiana al socialismo*.¹³ Togliatti immediately requested that

9 APCI, Estero, Cina, mf. 0464, 1959, pp. 2973–2981.

10 APCI, Estero, Cina, mf. 0483, 1961, pp. 2635–2641.

11 See for instance, Höbel, 'Il PCI nella crisi del movimento comunista internazionale', pp. 531–542.

12 For a political and biographical profile of Zhao, see 'Zhao Yimin', in *Who was Who in the People's Republic of China* edited by Wolfgang Bartke (München: Saur, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 656–660.

13 See 'Sulle divergenze tra il compagno Togliatti e noi' [On the Divergences Between Comrade Togliatti and Us], Editorial of the *People's Daily*, December 31, 1962, and 'Ancora sulle divergenze tra il compagno Togliatti e noi' [Again on the Divergences Between Comrade

the P CI be given the opportunity to reply to the critiques, while being careful not to provoke a break in the relations between the two parties: in fact, Italian communists were insistent on inviting the CCP to send a delegation to Italy to exchange views and explain respective positions, an invitation which did not produce positive results. Togliatti would also firmly reject the Soviet idea of a collective condemnation of China, an attitude the Chinese leaders paid great attention to, seeing it as a sign that the P CI was not completely dependent on Moscow.

Soon after the end of the 10th Congress of the P CI, Luigi Longo – on behalf of the P CI Central Committee – sent a letter to the CCP Central Committee, inviting Chinese communist leaders to send a delegation to Italy (an invitation that had already been announced at the Congress by Togliatti) to exchange information and observe the contents and orientation of the P CI's political action. According to Longo, such a visit was 'particularly necessary and greatly sought by us after the critiques to the political orientation of our party'. He also stressed how 'many of your critiques are the result of an insufficient knowledge of the concrete situation developed in Italy due to the changed international situation [...]'.¹⁴

However, from then on until 1980, even though the Italian and Chinese communist parties never reached the point of formal rupture of their relations, bilateral contacts were practically non-existent, with the exception of a P CI delegation to Vietnam, led by Giancarlo Pajetta, that made a stop in Beijing in May 1965 and was received by Kang Sheng and Deng Xiaoping. This contact left Pajetta with the impression that friendly relations were still possible, although he noticed an intensification of the Chinese criticism, not so much on the P CI's positions regarding international policy, but rather on its broader political line.¹⁵

3 Understanding China: Italian Communists' Writings and Memories – Some Cases

As it has been pointed out in the first part, it was from 1956 to the early 1960s that the P CI and the CCP developed their policy of bilateral cooperation and

Togliatti and Us], Editorial of *Red Flag*, 3–4, 1963. Italian versions published in Milan, Edizioni Oriente, 1963.

14 Longo's letter of 11 January 1963: see APCI, Estero, Cina, mf. 0492, 1963 (quotations at pp. 2263–2264).

15 Pajetta, 'Come il Pci ha guardato alla rivoluzione cinese', pp. 7–9.

exchanges, aiming at knowing the other side better and discussing to try to reach a basic consensus on main topics and questions (war and peace, revolution and peaceful transition, Moscow's leading role and search for more autonomy from the U.S.S.R., etc.) which was at the heart of the debate within the international communist movement. In this sense, the 20th Congress of the CPSU and Nikita Khrushchev's report and secret speech obviously had a tremendous impact on the communist parties worldwide. The 20th Congress was followed by protests and revolts in Poland, and particularly in Hungary during the second half of the year: a crisis which led to Soviet military intervention in Hungary in November 1956, which resulted in the creation of a pro-soviet regime. At the same time, the Suez crisis in the Middle East from October to November 1956 seemed to confirm the existence of new, growing tensions in the context of the Cold War.

This represented quite a clear shift from the general approach that had prevailed during the previous years, which saw the emergence of more optimistic views about the future of the world after the end of the war in Korea, the Geneva Conference and the Bandung Conference. It was within such a context that, as has already been indicated, the exchange of delegations between the two parties occurred for the first time in 1956.

As the head of the 1956 PCI delegation to China, Mauro Scoccimarro – after returning to Italy – in his political report presented during a meeting of the PCI Central Committee, stressed that thanks to the Congress the world had come to know, for the first time, the principles and criteria upon which the Chinese revolution was based and the peaceful transition from the then completed bourgeois democratic revolution to the socialist proletarian revolution. In his opinion, the most original contribution of the CCP was at that time the maintenance of the alliance with the national bourgeoisie, a vital question linked to the strategy of the peaceful transition to socialism. He also indicated that the CCP's invaluable experience when it came to the bourgeois democratic revolution and the post-1949 politics of alliance in governing the newly established PRC could also offer a lesson for the Italian proletariat.¹⁶

As was reported by *l'Unità*, this understanding of the relevance of the CCP's experience for the Italian communists was also developed by Scoccimarro during a long conversation between the Italian delegation and Mao Zedong on the margin of the Congress. The conversation covered historical experiences, the

16 Mauro Scoccimarro, *La rivoluzione cinese*. [The Chinese Revolution. Report to the PCI Central Committee, 20 October 1956], (Rome: La Stampa moderna, 1956).

problems of the workers' movement and the new questions raised by the 20th Congress of the CPSU.¹⁷

The unfolding of the Sino-Soviet dispute in the late 1950s imposed more and more limits on the PCI action with respect to China, narrowing its margins of manoeuvre. However, as has already been indicated, it was only in this complex situation, when the Sino-Soviet alliance was already deteriorating, that the Italian communists sent a high-level delegation to China in April 1959, with the aim of exchanging views with the CCP leaders and signing a joint document that would strengthen and consolidate bilateral relations. Upon arrival in Beijing, the delegation was welcomed by Liu Ningyi and then met with Peng Zhen to whom Pajetta said that Italians and Chinese communists could understand each other well because 'we, as much as you, have always wanted to be a national party, closely linked to the national situation and at the same time to socialist internationalism'.¹⁸

The conversation with Peng Zhen soon turned to the current nature of imperialism, with Peng Zhen outlining its strategic weakness and stating that 'in the case of a war today, there is no doubt on which side the victory would be'. Pajetta emphasized instead that the policy and struggle for international détente and peace was the most suitable means to weaken American imperialism.¹⁹ The nature of American imperialism and its limits were also addressed during a conversation between the Italian delegation and Foreign Minister Chen Yi the following day.²⁰ The journey consolidated the political relationship between the two parties, leading to the solemn signing of a joint document. In July 1959, the PCI's theoretical journal *Rinascita* dedicated an entire issue to the visit, with articles written by the members of the delegation with positive descriptions of the Chinese economy and society under the Great Leap Forward.²¹

As was indicated in the first part of this study, if we look at available reports and memories left by members of the delegation, it would seem that none of them perceived any signs of hardship in China's countryside, or at least chose to keep it to themselves if they did. They also did not perceive the problems

17 Franco Calamandrei, 'Prime considerazioni sul Congresso cinese: lungo colloquio tra Scoccimarro e Mao Tse-dun' [First reflections on the Chinese Congress: long conversation between Scoccimarro and Mao Zedong], *L'Unità*, no. 265 (26 September 1956): p. 1.

18 AP CI, Estero, Cina, mf. 0464, 1959, pp. 2776–2953 (Report on the visit of the PCI delegation to China), p. 2792.

19 Ibid., pp. 2791–2799 (Peng Zhen's quotation at p. 2797).

20 Ibid., pp. 2800–2822.

21 See 'La Cina oggi e domani' [China today and tomorrow], in *Rinascita*, xvi (7–8), Luglio-Agosto 1959.

related to the implementation of Mao's policies and the emerging tensions within the CCP leadership group. One important source about the 1959 PCI delegation to China are the memoirs by Luciano Barca. Barca stated that deciding to make the journey to China while a secret dispute was going on between Moscow and Beijing 'was in itself a relevant political act', and nothing less than a 'calculated act of autonomy by Togliatti'.²² As a matter of fact, according to Barca it seems that the Soviet leaders did not view the Italian initiative very positively, considering the fact that, upon arrival in Moscow, the Italian delegation found that no leaders or officials from the party's foreign section were there to meet them.²³

According to Barca, the CCP leaders warmly welcomed the delegation, and reserved special treatment for Pajetta, as if he were a head of state. During a meeting with Liu Ningyi (then President of China's Federation of Trade Unions), which took place upon their arrival in Beijing, Pajetta expressed the delegation's requests and expectations of the visit: to exchange information with the CCP on the party's work, the issues related to the people's communes and industrialization, and on the international situation. Then, among other things, Pajetta stated that the Chinese policy regarding Catholics was one of the problems the delegation wished to discuss with Chinese leaders. The conversations were initially formal, but gradually became more frank and concise. As soon as the issue of peaceful coexistence was introduced, divergences came to the surface, with Pajetta defending the result of the 20th Congress of the CPSU and Togliatti's (and the PCI's) position regarding the offensive nature of the struggle for world peace. The conversation with Chen Yi on 7 April mainly covered the international situation, with particular attention given to East and Southeast Asia, and it touched upon recent events in Tibet, and the relations with India. Chen Yi defined US imperialism as the most ferocious in the world and pointed to the differences between the strategy and tactics of US imperialism, stating that, while strong from a tactical point of view, it was strategically weak. For this reason, he added, US imperialism was to be considered both a paper and an iron tiger. Afterwards, the delegation had a meeting with Peng Zhen (8 April) to discuss many topics related to China's domestic politics, such as the development of class relations and class struggle, the policy towards counter-revolutionaries, the nationalization of industry, the 'Hundred Flowers' movement, and finally, the creation of the people's communes, one of the most controversial issue in China's relations with the Soviet Union.

22 Luciano Barca, *Cronache dall'interno del vertice del PCI* [*Chronicles from Within the PCI Leadership*], vol. I (Catanzaro: Rubbettino 2005), p. 202.

23 Ibid., p. 202.

As Shen Zhihua and Xia Yafeng indicated,²⁴ the initial reaction of the Soviet Union to China's people's communes was surprise, but Soviet academic circles seemed to be interested in China's experience and organized discussions about that, often voicing positive views on its advantages. However, the Soviet press gave little coverage to the people's commune movement. Khrushchev, who had already manifested his evident contempt for the GIP, expressed in late 1958, while meeting Polish leader Gomulka, his 'repugnance to the people's commune', and in July 1959 for the first time he formally – however indirectly – offered a political judgement about the Chinese experience, strongly criticizing mistakes in setting up communes in 1920s in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's speech irritated Mao, who decided at the end to attack him openly.

Given such a situation and considering that the people's communes were the emblem and symbol of a different road to socialism from the one taken by the Soviet Union, the Italian delegation – according to Barca – seemed particularly interested in understanding what the people's communes really were.²⁵

On 17 April, the delegation met with Liu Shaoqi and discussed topics related to war and peace, international détente, as well as the relations between communist parties. Stimulated by Pajetta's statement that the PCI did not expect that the solution of national problems would come from the outside, Liu Shaoqi – while defending the unity of the Socialist bloc – argued that every party should solve its problems according to the experience acquired in its own country and not according to any other parties' will.²⁶ As Barca recalls, however, during talks with Mao Zedong, polemic allusions emerged when he hinted at a matter of principle: probably alluding to Togliatti's *via italiana al socialismo* and *riforme di struttura*,²⁷ Mao stated that a peaceful transition to a new system of relations was difficult and that in all class struggles it is not possible to seize power without provoking a fight.²⁸

This visit by the delegation of the Italian Communist Party to China finally envisaged the formal signing of a protocol. Pajetta accepted, but only on the

24 Shen Zhihua, 'The Great Leap Forward, the People's Communes and the Rupture of the Sino-Soviet Alliance', *The Cold War History of Sino-Soviet Relations*, June 2005, <www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/publications>; Shen Zhihua, Xia Yafeng, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945–1959. A New History* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).

25 Barca, *Cronache dall'interno*, vol. I, pp. 202–225.

26 AP CI, Estero, Cina, mf. 0464, 1959, pp. 2868–2870.

27 The expression *riforme di struttura* (structural reform) basically indicated the need, for Togliatti, for the realization in Italy of a series of radical reforms which would open the way to a gradual and hopefully peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism.

28 Barca, *Cronache dall'interno*, vol. I, pp. 221. See also the minutes of the conversation between the Italian delegation and Mao Zedong, in AP CI, Estero, Cina, mf. 0464, 1959, p. 2905.

condition that nothing contradicted the PCI positions, and that an explicit mention be made of the *via italiana al socialismo*; the Chinese demanded that a mention be made of the people's communes. Barca was in charge of negotiating the text, a long process that forced the Italians to work day and night and that disclosed the Chinese dissent towards the Italian positions (peaceful coexistence and *via italiana al socialismo*). According to Barca, the Chinese considered the Italian recognition of the original experience of the people's communes to be a point that could not be given up (for the Italians it was a delicate matter, as was already indicated above): they bound this point to their own acceptance of mentioning Togliatti's 'structural reform', considered by the Chinese as 'an unusual term in the Marxist and Communist literature'.²⁹

Many years later, Giancarlo Pajetta – who was at that time the 'foreign minister' of the PCI – in an article written for *Rinascita* in 1976, reiterated his impression that in 1959 the Chinese political line was diverging from the positions of the 20th Congress of the CPSU. He added that more generally, the Chinese political strategy was also diverging from the policy of the other communist parties on the themes of détente and peace, as well as on the possibility of a democratic road to socialism. The Italians clearly perceived that there was a concealed polemic and that the Chinese might want to sound out the Italians' real positions. According to Pajetta, talks were dominated by diplomacy and allusiveness, so much so that upon their return to Italy, the members of the PCI delegation did not hide their serious worries about the future. At the same time, however, they wanted to reaffirm their strong appreciation for, and positive judgement of, the CCP leaders and the Chinese road to socialism.³⁰

In 1978, when interviewed by journalist Ottavio Cecchi about his experiences in the field of the PCI's foreign policy, Pajetta again recalled:³¹

In 1959, I was in China with a party delegation. I soon got the impression that China's political line was clearly diverging from that of the Soviet Union. [...] During that visit, we met with Peng Chen [Peng Zhen], Teng Hsiao-ping [Deng Xiaoping] [...], we met with Liu Shao-chi [Liu Shaoqi], Chen Yi [...] and at the end we were received by Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong] himself, with whom we had a long conversation. During these talks, we defended the positions of Togliatti, which, after all, were also

29 Barca, *Cronache dall'interno*, vol. 1, p. 218.

30 Pajetta, 'Come il PCI ha guardato alla rivoluzione cinese', pp. 7–9.

31 Giancarlo Pajetta, *La lunga marcia dell'internazionalismo. Intervista di Ottavio Cecchi* [The Long March of Internationalism. An Interview with Ottavio Cecchi] (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1978), pp. 135–136.

the Soviet positions about foreign policy and the international prospects: détente, non-inevitability of war, the search for a national and peaceful road to socialism in our country. On these themes we encountered coolness, we were asked insidious questions, and more than once we had to reply firmly to polemical allusions towards us. We discussed for entire days, even the nights on every sentence of the final communiqué. To the extent that I left Comrade Barca and others with the task of keeping on, begging them to let me sleep and to call me only if they encountered problems for which the Chinese would have requested my intervention.

Misunderstandings and divergences were finally resolved with a compromise, albeit only formally, and on 19 April 1959, Pajetta and Deng Xiaoping signed the joint document in the presence of Mao Zedong. The picture appeared in the CCP's official newspaper, *Renmin ribao*, the following day. Afterwards, Pajetta left China to return to Rome, while the other members of the delegation continued the trip around China. While in Xi'an they were informed that Liu Shaoqi had been elected President of the People's Republic of China, but were reassured that this would in no way change Mao's role even if he was not reconfirmed as the PRC President, a position he had held since 1954.³²

4 Conclusion

In addressing the question of the views and approaches developed by the PCI in its relations with the CCP and People's China in the 1950s and early 1960s, this chapter has tried to show that the PCI leaders generally viewed the CCP revolutionary experience and politics in a flexible way, attributing a positive judgement to its nationally rooted peculiarities. This evaluation largely stemmed from the PCI's own national experience and its search for a more autonomous role internationally. Available documents, reports and memories regarding the PCI leadership's vision of and approach to the CCP, the Chinese revolution and the Chinese road to socialism show that those PCI leaders who during those years had the chance to go to China and meet with Chinese leaders received mostly positive impressions from their visits and talks. They were also able to convey their impressions not only to the party, but also to the Italian public – or almost to that part of the public which was more politically and culturally sympathetic and sensitive to the PCI and generally speaking to the 'Italian left'.

³² Barca, *Cronache*, vol. I, pp. 217–224.

Even during the years (the 1960s) marked by the rift between the Soviet Union and People's China, by the polemics and divisions within the international communist movement and by a basic freeze in Italian and Chinese communists' bilateral relations due to their conflicting views on some fundamental questions (war and peace, peaceful coexistence, transition from capitalism to socialism, etc.), one important point should be considered: the Italian Communist Party continued its political battle to avoid a political condemnation of the Chinese Communist Party by Moscow and by the international communist movement. At the same time, the PCI continued and intensified its political and parliamentary battle aiming at Italy's recognition of the People's Republic of China.

In 1962, at the 10th Congress of the PCI which marked an important step within the political polemics between Chinese and Italian communists, the final political report approved by the Congress affirmed that 'it is indispensable that China is given its place within the United Nations'.³³ At the same time, Togliatti was determined to defend the party's political positions from the criticism of the 'Chinese comrades', indicating that the Italian communists maintain a great consideration and respect towards Chinese communists, but they do not agree with the CCP's vision of the problem of war and peace, and their critique of 'peaceful coexistence'.³⁴

In the debate that followed Togliatti's opening report, Giancarlo Pajetta gave a speech in which he was highly critical of certain positions of the CCP as expressed by Zhao Yiming. Pajetta maintained that the 'structural reforms' that were part of the PCI strategy were not at all contrary to the struggle for socialism, but rather a part of it. He then strongly criticized the positions of the Albanian Party of Labour headed by Enver Hoxha, asking why 'such positions are encouraged by some [the Chinese]'. Finally, Pajetta blamed the CCP's radical critique of, and 'anathemas' against, the views of the Yugoslav comrades, while at the same time he recognized that the PCI also had reservations about some of their positions.³⁵

33 'Risoluzione politica', political resolution approved by the 10th Congress of the PCI (Rome, 2–8 December 1962), in *Da Gramsci a Berlinguer. La via italiana al socialismo attraverso i congressi del Partito Comunista Italiano* [From Gramsci to Berlinguer. The Italian Way to Socialism as Seen Through the PCI's National Congresses], vol. III (1956–1964), edited by Daniele Pugliese and Orazio Pugliese (Venezia: Edizioni del Calendario, 1985), p. 398.

34 Palmiro Togliatti, 'Conclusioni', closing speech at the 10th Congress of the PCI, in Pugliese and Pugliese, *Da Gramsci a Berlinguer*, pp. 386–389.

35 Giancarlo Pajetta, 'Le nostre divergenze con i compagni cinesi' [Our divergences with the Chinese comrades], speech at the 10th Congress of the PCI, in Bonchio, Bufalini, Gruppi, Natta (a cura), *Il Partito Comunista Italiano e il movimento operaio internazionale*

In his 'Memorandum on questions of the international working class movement and its unity' of 1964 (the so-called 'Yalta memorandum', written as a reminder for a scheduled meeting with Khrushchev), Togliatti on the one hand denounced the 'divisive actions' of the CCP, while on the other he stressed how quite a few communist parties around the world had replied to such actions with ideological polemics and propaganda and not in a political and constructive way.³⁶

Again, in the late 1960s, Luigi Longo, who was then the secretary of the PCI, indicated in a series of articles that he was strongly critical of the CCP's positions. At the same time, he stressed the need to be very careful and cautious, given the divisions among the various communist parties, about the possibility of convening an international conference of communist and workers parties with the aim of bringing about a final political condemnation of the CCP.³⁷ Longo's position thus confirms that while the PCI, from the 1960s on, was strongly determined to defend their own positions against radical criticism by the Chinese Communist Party, it was also highly committed to contrast any general political condemnation of the CCP by Moscow and the international communist movement and to avoid that the Chinese communists and people suffered from a greater international isolation.

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36 Palmiro Togliatti, 'Promemoria sulle questioni del movimento operaio internazionale e della sua unità' (Yalta, August 1964), in Bonchio, Bufalini, et al., *Il Partito Comunista Italiano*, pp. 235–247. On some general questions regarding the communist international movement and the 'Yalta Memorandum' see among others: Alexander Höbel, 'PCI e movimento comunista internazionale 1956–1964. Dal xx Congresso del PCUS al "Memoriale di Yalta"' [The PCI and the International Communist Movement 1956–1964. From the 20th Congress of the CPSU to the 'Yalta Memorandum'], in *Scritture di Storia*, no. 4 (September 2005), available on www.academia.edu; Carlo Spagnolo, *Sul memoriale di Yalta. Togliatti e la crisi del movimento comunista internazionale (1956–1964)* [On the Yalta memorandum. Togliatti and the Crisis of the International Communist Movement, 1956–1964] (Rome: Carocci, 2007).

37 Luigi Longo, 'L'unità del movimento operaio e comunista' (The unity of the communist and workers' movement), in *Rinascita*, no. 41–42–43–44 (October 1967), later reprinted in Bonchio, Bufalini, et al., *Il Partito Comunista Italiano*, pp. 272–288.

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Everyday Propaganda: the Leftist Press and Sino-British Relations in Hong Kong, 1952–1967

Chi-kwan Mark

1 Introduction

The Cold War was at once a global conflict and a local experience. The ideological, military, and economic competition between the United States and the Soviet Union was global in scope, covering nearly every part of the world. It was local in that Washington and Moscow were not almighty and instead small actors on the ground were able to exploit the superpowers for their own interests. The cultural Cold War¹ in particular was sustained and experienced by ordinary people on a daily basis.² Film makers, book publishers, and press journalists were all involved, either consciously or unwittingly, in the battle for hearts and minds across the world.

This chapter focuses on Sino-British relations in Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. Specifically, it examines how the Hong Kong and British governments dealt with the problem of ‘everyday propaganda’ by the local left wing supported by the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Two case studies will be discussed below. In 1952 and 1967, anti-colonial riots erupted in Hong Kong. In response to both riots, the Hong Kong government charged selected leftist³ newspapers with sedition. Notwithstanding the extensive legal and emergency powers in his possession, the Governor, supported by London, refrained from suspending

1 On the cultural Cold War in Asia, see Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat, eds., *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity, and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Zheng Yangwen, Hong Liu, and Michael Szonyi, eds., *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

2 On works highlighting local agency, see Jeffrey Engel, ed., *The Local Consequences of the Global Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza, eds., *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

3 In this paper, ‘leftist’ newspapers and ‘communist’ newspapers are used interchangeably to refer to all pro-Beijing papers. Names of individuals and places in Hong Kong are romanised in accordance with their Cantonese pronunciation, while names of Chinese Communist leaders follow Pinyin romanisation.

the main communist papers or closing down the Hong Kong branch of the New China News Agency (NCNA), which served as China's de facto embassy in the territory. The British were all too aware that the 'everyday propaganda' of the leftists was routine, repetitive, and mundane, yet imbued with symbolic meaning. Propaganda was a facet of 'everyday life'⁴ with which Hong Kong had to live: the primary aim of the Hong Kong and British governments was to contain, not 'roll back', the influence of the NCNA and the publications of the leftist press.

A study of the British responses to leftist propaganda during the 1952 and 1967 riots shines a light on Sino-British relations and the cultural Cold War in Hong Kong. While space does not allow for a detailed comparative analysis, this chapter will conclude with some remarks on the parallels between the Hong Kong case and the cultural Cold War in Europe.

2 Britain, China, and Hong Kong in the Wider Cold War

After 1949, the United Kingdom and the PRC were neither real enemies nor true friends in the Cold War. Despite Britain's diplomatic recognition in January 1950, China called for the opening of negotiation over the establishment of diplomatic relations. Owing to the British attitude towards Taiwan and Hong Kong, which contradicted the principle of 'one China' in Beijing's eyes, the Sino-British negotiations were brought to an abrupt end in late June, when the Korean War broke out. Sino-British relations improved somewhat in the course of the Geneva Conference on Indochina in mid-1954, when the two countries agreed to establish diplomatic relations at the *chargé d'affaires* level. Nevertheless, the Anglo-American 'special relationship' and particularly Britain's support for the Nationalist government's representation in the United Nations meant that Sino-British relations remained precarious in the late 1950s and the 1960s. Not until 1972 did China agree to exchange ambassadors and develop full diplomatic relations with Britain.⁵

China's attitude towards Hong Kong resembled its precarious coexistence with Britain. Since 1949, Mao Zedong had pursued a policy of 'long-term planning and full utilization' towards Hong Kong. While not recognizing the three 'unequal treaties' governing the status of the Crown Colony, the Chairman

4 On the notion of 'everyday life', see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

5 See Robert Boardman, *Britain and the People's Republic of China 1949–1974* (London: Macmillan, 1976); Victor S. Kaufman, *Confronting Communism: U.S. and British Policies toward China* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001); Chi-kwan Mark, *The Everyday Cold War: Britain and China, 1950–1972* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

tolerated the reality of British 'administration', and would resume China's sovereignty over the whole of Hong Kong when the conditions were ripe (probably in 1997 when the ninety-nine year lease of the New Territories expired). With the outbreak of the Korean War, China attached great importance to Hong Kong's strategic role in the Cold War, utilizing it to collect intelligence, obtain remittances, and launch propaganda.⁶ Likewise, the United States was eager to use Hong Kong for propaganda and humanitarian operations.⁷ In this regard, both the left and the right were left relatively free to pursue their respective ideological causes in Hong Kong. The primary role of the colonial government was to mediate the competition and conflict between different Cold War agents on the ground.

From a wider Cold War perspective, China's interactions with Britain and Hong Kong were shaped by Mao Zedong's theory of the 'intermediate zone'. As early as 1946, Mao had suggested the existence of an 'intermediate zone' consisting of capitalist, colonial and semi-colonial countries in Europe, Asia and Africa, which separated the two superpowers and had 'contradictions' with 'US imperialism'.⁸ Such a view was formally crystallized into the concept of 'two intermediate zones' between late 1963 and early 1964.⁹ As a declining imperialist power, Mao saw Britain not as a real threat to China's security, but, together with Europe, as a counterweight to the Soviet Union, whose relations with China had spiralled downwards since the late 1950s. As for Britain, Europe, not China or Asia, was deemed vital to its national interest. Although successive British prime ministers ranked the 'three interlocking circles' differently – for example, Winston Churchill, in 1952, attached greater importance to the Anglo-American alliance and the Empire/Commonwealth than to Europe, whilst Harold Wilson, in 1967, chose the European Community over Britain's presence east of Suez – a consistent policy objective of Britain was to avoid war in Asia so as to focus on the defence of Europe.¹⁰

6 Jin Yaoru 金堯如, *Zhonggong Xianggang zhengce miwen shilu* 中共香港政策秘聞實錄 [A Secret Record of the Chinese Communist Party's Hong Kong Policy] (Hong Kong: Tianyuan shuwu, 1998), pp. 2–5; Qi Pengfei 齊鵬飛, *Deng Xiaoping yu Xianggang huigui* 鄧小平與香港回歸 [Deng Xiaoping and the Return of Hong Kong] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2004), pp. 19–52.

7 See Chi-kwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations, 1949–1957* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Ch. 5.

8 'Talk with the American correspondent Anna Louise Strong', 6 August 1946, The PRC Foreign Ministry and the CCP Central Committee's Party Literature Research Centre, ed., *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), pp. 45–48.

9 'There are two intermediate zones', September 1963 and January 1964, *ibid.*, pp. 387–388.

10 See John W. Young, *Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century* (London: Arnold, 1997), Ch. 6 and 7.

3 China's Propaganda Machine in Hong Kong

Although registered as a news agency, the NCNA in Hong Kong (or *Xinhua*) functioned covertly as China's de facto embassy there, supervising the operations of all Chinese state organs and united front organizations and playing some sort of a diplomatic liaison role between Beijing and the Hong Kong government.¹¹ By late 1951, the NCNA Hong Kong was directed by the newly established Hong Kong and Macao Work Committee, based in the Chinese city of Guangzhou, some 118 kilometres from Hong Kong. By 1959, the Hong Kong and Macao Work Committee was relocated to Hong Kong, operating inside *Xinhua* which served as its public face.¹² Propaganda, together with united front work, was the main task of the Committee, which was in effect the underground Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Hong Kong.¹³ In the 1950s, there were nine communist newspapers, either controlled by Beijing or independently owned, with a combined daily circulation of about 100,000 copies, or about one-sixth of some thirty newspapers in a city of three million people by the end of the decade.¹⁴ The two main papers were *Ta Kung Pao* and *Wen Wei Po*, together with *New Evening Post* (an affiliate of *Ta Kung* focusing on entertainment themes). According to Premier Zhou Enlai, *Ta Kung* and *Wen Wei* were not meant to become the Party newspaper like the *People's Daily*; rather, emphasis should be placed on 'patriotism', not 'socialism', in order to build the broadest possible united front with the majority of the local populace.¹⁵ Nonetheless, as Liao Chengzhi, who was in charge of Overseas Chinese

11 Liang Shangyuan 梁上苑, ed., *Zhonggong zai Xianggang* 中共在香港 [The CCP in Hong Kong] (Hong Kong: Wide Angle Press, 1989), p. 133; Cindy Yik-yi Chu, *Chinese Communists and Hong Kong Capitalists, 1937–1997* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 41–42.

12 Lo Ho-lui 羅海雷, *Wode fuqin Lo Fu: Yige baoren, 'jiandie' he zuojia de gushi* 我的父親羅孚：一個報人、「間諜」和作家的故事 [My Father Lo Fu: The Story of a News Worker, 'Spy' and Writer] (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books Ltd., 2011), p. 78; Xu Jiatun 許家屯, *Xu Jiatun Xianggang huiyilu* 許家屯香港回憶錄 [Xu Jiatun's Hong Kong Memoirs], vol. 2 (Taipei: United Press, 1993), p. 67.

13 Huang Wenfang 黃文放, *Jiedu Beijing siwei* 解讀北京思維 [Deciphering Beijing's Thinking] (Hong Kong: Economic Times Press, 2001), p. 147; Christine Loh, *Underground Front: The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), pp. 88–94.

14 *Works of Liao Chengzhi* 廖承志文集, vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (HK) Co. Ltd., 1990), p. 397; Lee Siu-nam 李少南, 'Xianggang de zhongxi baoye' 香港的中西報業 [The Chinese and English Press in Hong Kong], in *Xianggangshi xinbian* 香港史新編 [Hong Kong History: New Perspectives], vol. 2, edited by Wang Gungwu 王賡武 (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (HK) Co. Ltd., 1997), pp. 521–522, 530–532.

15 Jin 金堯如, *Zhonggong Xianggang zhengce miwen shilu* 中共香港政策秘聞實錄, pp. 17–18.

affairs, argued, to be 'patriotic' was to 'love the People's Republic of China'.¹⁶ The editorials and articles of *Ta Kung* and *Wen Wei* could do nothing but reflect Beijing's policy line, and disseminated political messages such as 'patriotism', 'anti-colonialism', China's 'sovereignty' over Hong Kong, and opposition to 'two Chinas'. The directors and editors of the two papers met regularly with their comrades in the NCNA, and travelled to the mainland to receive instructions from the Chinese leaders.¹⁷

The British were not unaware that the NCNA's role in Hong Kong was anything but conventional. As David Trench, who served as Governor Alexander Grantham's Defence Secretary in the early 1950s (and became Governor himself in 1964) recollected, the NCNA was 'an official news agency of the Chinese Government and, as such, had a semi-, demi-, hemi-official status, slightly official status', serving as 'some kind of a channel of contact with China'.¹⁸ The guiding principle of the Hong Kong government's policy was 'firmness without provocation'.¹⁹ As long as the NCNA and its agents did not break the law, the British aimed to contain, not 'roll back', the CCP presence in Hong Kong. But while affording the media relative freedom,²⁰ the British were anxious to put in place a number of legal and emergency measures to deal with possible political dissent and agitation. As early as 1949, the Emergency Regulations (Amendment) Ordinance granted the Governor extensive powers to deal with an emergency, including censorship and suppression of publication. In May 1951, the Control of Publications (Consolidation) Ordinance provided for the registration of local newspapers and news agencies and a deposit of HK \$10,000. The Ordinance made it an offence to publish 'false news' or material tending to 'induce' people to 'commit an offence', and allowed the court or a magistrate to order the suppression for up to six months of any local newspapers

¹⁶ *Works of Liao Chengzhi* 廖承志文集, vol. 1, p. 328.

¹⁷ Lo 羅海雷, *Wode fuqin Lo Fu* 我的父親羅孚, pp. 85–88; Wang Junyan 王俊彥, *Liao Chengzhi zhuan* 廖承志傳 [A Biography of Liao Chengzhi] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006), pp. 558–561.

¹⁸ Transcript of Interviews with Sir David Trench by Steve Tsang, 23 and 24 April 1987, Mss. Ind.Ocn.S. 337, p. 14, Weston Library, University of Oxford, UK.

¹⁹ Paskin to Scott, 9 January 1952, FO 371/99243 FC10111/3, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Kew, London, UK. Also see Steve Tsang, 'The Strategy of Survival: The Cold War and Hong Kong's Policy towards Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Activities in the 1950s', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25, no. 2 (May 1997): pp. 294–317.

²⁰ Lee 李少南, 'Xianggang de zhongxi baoye' 香港的中西報業, pp. 526, 533; Li Kwok-sing 李谷城, *Xianggang baoye bainian cangsang* 香港報業百年滄桑 [The Hundred-Year Vicissitudes of the Hong Kong Press] (Hong Kong: Ming Pao Press, 2000), pp. 309–310; Carol P. Lai, *Media in Hong Kong: Press Freedom and Political Change, 1967–2005* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 10–11.

committing the above offences. The same year, the Sedition Ordinance defined a 'seditious intention' as an intention to 'bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection' against the government and the administration of justice in the Colony, as well as to 'raise discontent' among the people. Any person who printed, published, sold, or distributed any 'seditious publication' would be guilty under the Ordinance.²¹

In striking a delicate balance between leftist propaganda and relative freedom of expression, the British were put to the test in 1952 as a result of a riot.

4 The 1952 Riot and British Responses

On 21 November 1951, a serious fire destroyed the squatter settlement in Tung Tau Village, Kowloon, making more than 15,000 people homeless. The PRC claimed that it had an obligation to protect Chinese nationals in Hong Kong. Beijing's propaganda machine criticized the colonial authorities for failing to help and resettle the fire victims, given the Hong Kong government's philosophy of minimum social welfare.²² In February 1952, various people's organizations in the Chinese city of Guangzhou announced that a comfort mission for the Tung Tau victims would be sent to Hong Kong shortly.²³ However, the Hong Kong government made it plain that permission would not be granted to a comfort mission. Still, on the morning of 1 March, the comfort mission of thirty-one representatives proceeded to Hong Kong but, before reaching the border post at Lowu, was ordered by Premier Zhou Enlai to return to Guangzhou.²⁴ In Hong Kong, a reception committee headed by pro-Beijing representatives travelled to the British side of the border by train, but was stopped halfway through the journey by the Hong Kong police on the grounds of not possessing passes for the frontier zone. The party then returned to the railway station at Kowloon, where a large crowd numbering more than 10,000 had already assembled to greet the expected comfort mission. The disappointed

21 James C. Y. Shen, *The Law and Mass Media in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Mass Communications Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, September 1972), pp. 2–10; Richard Klein, 'The Empire Strikes Back: Britain's Use of the Law to Suppress Political Dissent in Hong Kong', *Boston University International Law Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 15–16; Chang Kuo-Sin, *A Survey of the Chinese Language Daily Press* (Hong Kong: Asian Programme, International Press Institute, 1968), p. 49.

22 See Alan Smart, *The Shek Kip Mei Myth: Squatters, Fires and Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1950–1963* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006).

23 *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報, 7 February, 11 February, and 22 February 1952.

24 Jin 金堯如, *Zhonggong Xianggang zhengce miwen shilu* 中共香港政策秘聞實錄, p. 26.

crowd dispersed along Nathan Road, and clashed with the Hong Kong Police. The March First Riot, as it was called, resulted in one death, over a hundred arrests, and eventually eighteen convictions and twelve expulsions.²⁵

Significantly, the Hong Kong riot took place against the backdrop of growing tensions in Sino-British bilateral relations as a result of the Korean War. Early in January, Prime Minister Winston Churchill had visited Washington, where he demonstrated solidarity with President Harry Truman. In addressing both Houses of Congress, Churchill said that the British response to a breakdown of an armistice in Korea would be 'frank, resolute and effective', while expressing his gratitude that the United States did 'not allow the Chinese anti-Communists on Formosa to be invaded and massacred from the mainland'.²⁶ In the week following Churchill's address, as the British diplomats in Beijing assessed it, Britain 'came in for more than its usual share of attention' in China's press propaganda.²⁷ China apparently linked the Korean War with events in Hong Kong. Also in January, the Hong Kong Governor in consultation with the Executive Council had decided to invoke the Expulsion of Undesirables Ordinance to expel thirteen Chinese connected with the Hong Kong film industry 'on the grounds that they were actively working on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party and, to that end, employed methods of coercion to induce the production of pro-communist propaganda film in the Colony'.²⁸ Between 1 January and 2 May 1952, a total of 792 'undesirable aliens', mostly pro-Beijing leftists, were deported from Hong Kong to China.²⁹ If the Hong Kong government expelled 'undesirable aliens' for the sake of law and order, China and the Hong Kong leftists regarded expulsion as 'an instrument of political persecution'.³⁰ On 25 January, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs lodged a 'serious protest' with Britain about the arrest and deportation of Chinese 'nationals' from Hong Kong.³¹ Not long afterwards, China reacted vigorously to the March First Riot.

25 Hong Kong to Colonial Office, nos. 181 and 183, 2 March 1952, FO 371/99243 FC10111/33, TNA.

26 Churchill's address to Congress, BBC monitor, 17 January 1952, FO 371/99260 FC1025/3, TNA.

27 Beijing to Foreign Office, 9 February 1952, FO 371/99256 FC1021/3, TNA.

28 Hong Kong to Colonial Office, no. 33, 10 January 1952, FO 371/99243 FC10111/7; Colonial Office to Hong Kong, no. 102, 24 January 1952, FO 371/99243 FC10111/7, TNA.

29 Oral Answers, 28 May 1952, *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, vol. 501, session 1951–52, columns, 1350–1351.

30 Lo 羅海雷, *Wode fuqin Lo Fu 我的父親羅孚*, p. 81; Chau Yick 周奕, *Xianggang zuopai douzhengshi 香港左派鬥爭史* [A History of the Leftist Struggle in Hong Kong] (Hong Kong: Leeman Press, 2002), pp. 96–105.

31 Beijing to Foreign Office, no. 59, 26 January 1952, FO 371/99243 FC10111/14, TNA.

On 4 March, the *People's Daily* published a commentary article, strongly protesting that 'the atrocities of illegally persecuting the Chinese residents in Hong Kong by British imperialism have become ever more serious', including not only the earlier 'unlawful arrests and expulsions' of Chinese film workers but also, on 1 March, the sending of 'a large batch of military police to massacre our nationals there in a planned and organized manner'. Likening the Hong Kong government's actions to the perceived cooperation between Churchill and Truman over the Korean conflict, the article criticized the fact that Britain, 'at the dictate of the United States', intended to 'turn Hong Kong into an imperialist base of aggression' against China.³² In the following weeks, the *People's Daily* continued to feature reports hostile to the Hong Kong government.³³

On 5 March 1952, *Ta Kung Pao*, *Wen Wei Po*, and the *New Evening Post* reprinted on their front pages the *People's Daily* article.³⁴ Two weeks later, the Hong Kong government brought criminal charges of 'publishing seditious publications' against the publishers, editors, and printers of the three papers. The trial of *Ta Kung Pao*, the first case brought to court, lasted from 16 April to 5 May. Fei Yiming, the publisher, and Lee Tsung-ying, the editor, both denied 'any seditious intention', arguing that the article in question was indeed a 'protest' by the Chinese government and was re-published from the *People's Daily*, which was 'the official organ representing the people's voices of the People's Republic'. Representing the defendants, Percy Chen (a pro-Beijing barrister) and Brook Bernacchi (a liberal British barrister) asserted that the *People's Daily* article was printed on the front page of *Ta Kung Pao* side by side with a summary of Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttelton's statement on the March riot³⁵ and a statement by the 'Guangzhou comfort mission', thus underscoring 'the paper's policy of giving people the whole truth'. The trial, they contended, was 'a political case'.³⁶ At last, the Supreme Court found Fei and Lee guilty of the charges, sentencing both of them to a fine or imprisonment and ordering the suspension of the paper for six months. The leaders of *Ta Kung Pao* appealed to the Full Court on the grounds of misconceived procedure and wrongly admitted evidence at the original trial.³⁷

32 *People's Daily* 人民日報, 4 March 1952.

33 See Beijing to Foreign Office, no. 181, 7 March 1952, FO 371/99244 FC1011/38; Beijing to Foreign Office, no. 243, 21 March 1952, FO 371/99244 FC1011/44, TNA.

34 *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報, 5 March 1952; *Wen Wei Po* 文匯報, 5 March 1952.

35 See *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, 3 March 1952, vol. 497, session 1951–52, columns 31–34.

36 'Fei Yi Ming and Lee Tsung Ying v. The Crown', *Hong Kong Law Report* 36 (1952): pp. 133–165 (Quotes from pp. 144–145); *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報, 23 April, 17 April, 24 April, and 30 April 1952.

37 Chau 周奕, *Xianggang zuopai douzhengshi* 香港左派鬥爭史, pp. 93–94.

China made formal diplomatic representation to Britain. On 10 May 1952, the Chinese Foreign Ministry delivered a strongly worded protest to the British Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing, condemning Hong Kong's continued arrest and deportation of Chinese residents and the 'illegal trial' of *Ta Kung Pao* and of the other two communist papers. The protest note concluded: 'Such a series of reactionary measures [...] have trampled on the fundamental freedom and rights of the Chinese Residents in Hong Kong, imposed a reign of terror on them and thus constituted a hostile and provocative act against the People's Republic of China.' China called for Britain to 'stop immediately the aforementioned atrocities', lest it 'should be held entirely responsible for all the consequences'.³⁸

The propaganda war continued in the Hong Kong court. On 17 May 1952, an application by the defendants of *Ta Kung Pao* for a stay of execution of the six-month suspension order pending appeal was granted. On 28 June, the Full Court rejected the appeals against conviction by Fei and Lee. But two days later, it changed the suspension order to the period during which the paper had actually been banned (that is, from 5 to 17 May). The charges against *Wen Wei Po* and *New Evening Post* were dropped. The Hong Kong government's official explanation was that the Crown, 'having achieved its objects in showing that it would not tolerate the publication of seditious matter in Hong Kong without taking action, was not vindictive and considered that it was not necessary in the public interest to continue this series of prosecutions'.³⁹ But that was only part of the truth. In fact, the British were concerned that the defence team of *Ta Kung Pao*, led by Percy Chen, had turned the courtroom into a site of ideological struggle.⁴⁰ According to Chen, even the Crown Prosecutor had privately admitted to him that it was not *Ta Kung Pao* that was put on trial, but rather it was the leftists who 'tried the Hong Kong government'.⁴¹ During the trial, Chen had allegedly disclosed sensitive information to the Hong Kong government's embarrassment – for example, the existence of a concentration camp for political detainees in Chatham Road, Hong Kong Island, and the tactic of deportation in the middle of the night.⁴² Instead of being prosecuted for 'seditious publication', he argued, the case of *Ta Kung Pao* was a 'political trial' that

38 Protest by Chinese Foreign Ministry, 10 May 1952, enclosed in Beijing to Foreign Office, no. 398, 11 May 1952, FO 371/99244 FC10111/58, TNA.

39 *Hong Kong Annual Report, 1952* (Hong Kong: The Government Printer, 1953), p. 216.

40 For an insightful account of legal trials as ideological performance and political struggle in Weimar Germany, see Henning Grunwald, *Courtroom to Revolutionary Stage: Performance and Ideology in Weimar Political Trials* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

41 Tse Wing-kwong 謝榮滾, et al., *Chen Junbao riji quanji* 陳君葆日記全集 [The Chen Junbao Diary], vol. 3: 1950–56 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Commercial Press, 2004), p. 162.

42 *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報, 22 April and 29 April 1952.

threatened 'press freedom' in Hong Kong.⁴³ To Governor Grantham, 'Action in courts leads to long drawn out publicity and enables seditious propaganda to be carried out under privilege.'⁴⁴ Robert Black, Colonial Secretary and later Governor himself, similarly recollected that 'the hearings provided a platform for left-wing propaganda by defending Counsel. This was counterproductive. We came to the conclusion that it wasn't in our interests to pursue. The balance of advantage lay in discontinuing proceedings. We started, but we withdrew.'⁴⁵

But the British had not completely lost the everyday propaganda war with China and the leftists. Around the time of the *Ta Kung Pao* trial, the Hong Kong government and the left wing were involved in another trial of strength. Back in 1951, the colonial authorities had asked the NCNA Hong Kong to register as a 'news agency' and make a deposit of HK \$10,000 in accordance with the Control of Publications (Consolidation) Ordinance. But despite the expiry of the time limit for registration on 5 May 1952 (later extended to 23 May), the Director of the NCNA, Huang Zuomei, refused to act, claiming that, 'as a state news agency', the Hong Kong branch of the NCNA should not be subject to the provisions of the Ordinance.⁴⁶ In response, the British delivered a note to the Chinese Foreign Ministry on 6 June. Accordingly, the British government 'understand [that] the Agency has argued that, as a branch of the State News Agency of the Central People's Government, it is not in consequence subject to provisions of the [Control of Publications (Consolidation)] Ordinance'. But 'there is no obligation on any State to permit news agencies of another state to function in its territory', and, as far as the NCNA Hong Kong was concerned, continued permission 'will be dependent upon the agency conducting itself in conformity with international propriety and upon compliance with local legal requirements including registration'. To reinforce its argument, the note mentioned that 'State news agencies of other governments in Hong Kong have duly complied with registration requirements relevant to Hong Kong legislation'.⁴⁷ On 19 June, the Director of the NCNA replied to the Governor that, since '[the] Hong Kong branch was recognised as a State Agency', he was prepared to register under the Ordinance. (An application was made the same day.)⁴⁸

43 *Ta Kung Pao* 大公报, 29 April 1952.

44 Hong Kong to Colonial Office, no. 595, 23 July 1952, FO 371/99362 FC1672/36, TNA.

45 Transcript of interviews with Sir Robert Brown Black by Steve Tsang, 6 February, 19 March, and 3 April 1987, Mss.Ind.Ocn.S. 348, p. 3, Weston Library, University of Oxford, UK.

46 Hong Kong to Colonial Office, no. 396, 11 May 1952, FO 371/99362 FC1672/20; Hong Kong to Colonial Office, no. 407, 16 May 1952, FO 371/99244 FC10111/63, TNA.

47 Hong Kong to Colonial Office, no. 464, 7 June 1952, FO 371/99362 FC1672/29; Beijing to Foreign Office, no. 465, 7 June 1952, FO 371/99362 FC1672/31F, TNA.

48 Hong Kong to Colonial Office, no. 505, 22 June 1952, FO 371/99362 FC1672/33, TNA.

In assessing why Huang made concessions, a Whitehall official believed that Beijing was probably satisfied that the status of the NCNA Hong Kong as 'a Chinese State Agency' had been recognized by the British, and that there was 'no discrimination against the C.P.G.' as other state agencies in Hong Kong (such as the United States Information Service) were also required to register.⁴⁹

In sum, during the trial of *Ta Kung Pao* and the controversy over the NCNA's registration, the Hong Kong/British government and the left wing/China contested – in the press, in diplomatic exchanges, and in the courtroom – the character and limits of Hong Kong as a site of pro-Beijing propaganda. The registration of the NCNA in accordance with local laws and thus the Hong Kong government's recognition of its 'state agency' status, ironically, allowed the underground CCP to carry out its overt and covert functions with some degree of British acquiescence. After the relocation of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Committee from Guangzhou to Hong Kong in the late 1950s, Liang Weilin was the director of the NCNA Hong Kong. He became actively involved in the 'political work' of coordinating all the state, Party and leftist organizations and operations in the territory. The tone of 'everyday propaganda' by the leftist newspapers was relatively moderate in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This coincided with the improvement of Sino-British relations after the exchange of *chargés d'affaires* in 1954, although Beijing continued to criticize London for supporting America and Taiwan in the Cold War. However, the Hong Kong leftists became highly militant by 1967, when the Cultural Revolution in China, begun a year earlier, spilled over into Hong Kong and triggered large-scale anti-colonial riots.

5 The 1967 Riots and British Responses

Against the backdrop of growing social inequality and a 'communication gap' between government and society, in May 1967, an industrial dispute occurred at the Artificial Flower Works in Kowloon. Inspired by the Cultural Revolution on the mainland, on 16 May 1967 the local left wing set up a 'Committee of All Circles for the Struggle against Persecution by the British Authorities in Hong Kong' and turned the labour dispute into what would be an eight-month-long struggle. At first, the Hong Kong government adopted firm but non-provocative measures to restore law and order. But as the riots escalated into border skirmishes in early July, it hardened its response, for example by bringing in

49 Memorandum by Johnston, 26 June 1952, FO 371/99362 FC1672/32, TNA. Zhou Enlai was in favour of the registration of the NCNA. Jin 金堯如, *Zhonggong Xianggang zhengce miwen shilu* 中共香港政策秘聞實錄, pp. 10–11.

additional emergency powers, conducting more raids against suspected communist premises, and handing over border patrols to the Gurkhas (or British soldiers of Nepalese ethnicity).⁵⁰

While the 'Anti-Persecution Committee' was the front-line organizer, it was the NCNA, headed by Liang Weilin, that actually directed the struggle behind the scenes.⁵¹ Just as China's propaganda machine, including the *People's Daily*, fell under the influence of Chen Boda and other radical 'rebels', the NCNA Hong Kong was similarly radicalized. All local leftist newspapers were instructed to follow the 'language of the Cultural Revolution'. *Wen Wei Po* and *Ta Kung Pao* devoted their front pages to the *People's Daily* editorials and the news releases of China's NCNA, while deemphasizing local non-political news.⁵² The primary functions of the two papers during the 1967 riots were to politicize the events, mobilize the masses, and raise the morale of the Maoists at the closing stage of the riots – in short, they became tools of China's revolutionary propaganda.⁵³ They, along with other communist newspapers, featured highly provocative, inflammatory, and libellous editorials and reports, condemning 'British fascist atrocities' and vowing to 'smash the reactionary rule of British imperialism'. There was a gap between propaganda and reality, though. In 1967, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai had no intention of retaking Hong Kong. While supporting and at times restraining the local Maoists, they had not abandoned the policy of 'long-term planning and full utilization'.⁵⁴ After all, China's foreign exchange earnings from Hong Kong in 1966 were estimated to be £173 million, or a third of its total, on top of a large amount of Overseas Chinese remittances via Hong Kong.⁵⁵

50 On the 1967 riots, see Gary Ka-wai Cheung, *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009); Robert Bickers and Ray Yep, eds., *May Days in Hong Kong: Riot and Emergency in 1967* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

51 Lo 羅海雷, *Wode fuqin Lo Fu 我的父親羅孚*, pp. 132–133.

52 Jin 金堯如, *Zhonggong Xianggang zhengce miwen shilu 中共香港政策秘聞實錄*, p. 33; Fan Hanqi 方漢奇, *Dagong Bao bainianshi 大公報百年史* [A Centennial History of Dagong Bao] (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2004), p. 421.

53 Alice Y. L. Lee, 'The Role of Newspapers in the 1967 Riot: A Case Study of the Partisanship of the Hong Kong Press', in *Press and Politics in Hong Kong: Case Studies from 1967 to 1997*, edited by Clement Y. K. So and Joseph Man Chan (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asian-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1999), pp. 38–39, 44–55.

54 Li Ping 李平, et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976 周恩來年譜 1949–1976* [The Chronicle of Zhou Enlai, 1949–1976], vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), pp. 155, 169. On China's role in the Hong Kong riots, see Ma Jisen 馬繼森, *Waijiaobu Wenge jishi 外交部文革紀實* [The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), pp. 155–163.

55 'The Present Situation in China', Paper by Far Eastern Department, enclosed in Memorandum by Bolland to de la Mare, 8 June 1967, FCO 21/11 FC1/1 Part D, TNA.

The 'everyday propaganda' of the Hong Kong leftists during the riots confronted the British with 'the dilemma of either attacking "press freedom" or appearing to be meekly tolerating sedition'.⁵⁶ As at May 1967, *Wen Wei Po* and *Ta Kung Pao* had a daily circulation of 33,500 and 36,300 copies respectively, while the popular *New Evening Post* had 81,300. Together with six independently owned communist papers (such as *Hong Kong Evening News* and *Ching Po Daily*), the leftist press enjoyed an aggregate circulation of 454,900, or about a quarter of Hong Kong's total daily copies.⁵⁷ During May and June 1967, Governor David Trench was reluctant to take action against the leftist press, not least because it would be regarded by Beijing as a 'provocation'.⁵⁸ 'Institutional memory' also played a role here. In the event that the government decided to prosecute some of the communist papers for seditious publication, Trench was worried about a repetition of 'the generally unsatisfactory outcome of the prosecution of the *Ta Kung Pao* in 1952', which had provided 'undesirable opportunities for political propaganda' by the leftists.⁵⁹

By late July 1967, however, it was imperative for the Hong Kong government to take action against the leftist press. The failure of the industrial and food strikes on the one hand and the firm police raids on trade unions and communist premises on the other meant that the press was 'now one of the Communists' few remaining weapons still intact', with 'a stream of seditious and libellous statements, incitement to disaffection and violence, false news and general invective'. To Acting Governor Michael Gass (Trench was on sick leave in Britain), provided that the NCNA Hong Kong was not targeted, it was possible that Beijing might not be provoked into retaliation against Hong Kong. The issue to be decided was whether to act against the three leading communist papers (with an aggregate circulation of 141,700) or the six independently owned leftist papers (269,000). Gass had the latter in mind, for this might reduce the risk of China's reaction and curb the propaganda excesses of the leading papers.⁶⁰ The Commonwealth Office (after the merger of the Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office in 1966) approved Gass's

56 Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 600, 13 May 1967, FCO 40/113 HWB14/32 Part A, TNA.

57 Report by Hong Kong Police Special Branch, 24 October 1967, enclosed in Holmes to Galsworthy, 16 November 1967, FCO 40/114 HWB14/32 Part B, TNA.

58 Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 662, 22 May 1967, FCO 40/113 HWB14/32 Part A, TNA.

59 Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 595, 13 May 1967, FCO 40/113 HWB14/32 Part A, TNA.

60 Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 1112, 26 July 1967, FCO 40/113 HWB14/32 Part A, TNA.

proposed action in early August 1967.⁶¹ On 9 August, the Hong Kong police arrested the five executives of three independently owned leftist newspapers – *Afternoon News*, *Hong Kong Evening News*, and *Tin Fung Yat Po* – who were charged under the Sedition Ordinance, the Control of Publications (Consolidation) Ordinance, and the Police Force Incitement to Disaffection Ordinance. As the three papers continued to commit similar alleged offences before the trial, on 17 August 1967, they were ordered to be suspended until the termination of court proceedings. Two days later, the police raided the offices of the three newspapers, seizing a number of inflammatory items and detaining for questioning thirty-four persons, who were later released.⁶²

The arrest of the five executives and the suspension of the three papers prompted sharp reactions from the PRC's Foreign Ministry and particularly the radical Red Guards in China. On 20 August, the British Chargé in Beijing, Donald Hopson, was summoned to the Ministry to receive a note demanding that the British government should, within forty-eight hours, cancel the ban on the three leftist newspapers, call off the 'illegal law-suits' against the five executives, and release nineteen 'patriotic journalists', otherwise, it would 'be held responsible for all the consequences arising therefrom'.⁶³ When the forty-eight hour 'ultimatum' expired on the late night of 22 August, the zealous Red Guards, mainly from the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute and Tsinghua University, attacked the British Office and burnt it to the ground. Although Sino-British relations had reached an all-time low since 1950, the Wilson government remained committed to a policy of constructive engagement with China for the sake of world peace, trade, and Hong Kong's safety.⁶⁴

Back in Hong Kong, the trial of the five executives started in the Central Magistrates' Court on 21 August 1967. Similar to the trial of *Ta Kung Pao* in 1952, the five defendants turned the courtroom into a site of ideological struggle. But unlike Fei Yiming who was legally represented by Percy Chen, they chose to defend themselves. From the outset, the five executives, strongly protesting that the 'trial' was 'illegal', pleaded not guilty.⁶⁵ During the trial of *Afternoon News*, Wu Tai-chow (the publisher), Li Siu-hung (the director of Nam Cheong Printing Company which printed the three communist papers), and Chak Nuen-fai

61 Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 1151, 2 August 1967; Commonwealth Office to Hong Kong, no. 1607, 4 August 1967, FCO 40/113 HWB14/32 Part A, TNA.

62 Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 1202, 10 August 1967; Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, unnumbered, 18 August 1967; Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, unnumbered, 20 August 1967, FCO 40/113 HWB14/32 Part A, TNA.

63 *People's Daily* 人民日報, 21 August 1967.

64 See Mark, *The Everyday Cold War*, Ch. 4.

65 *South China Morning Post*, 25 August 1967; *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報, 22 August 1967.

(the manager of the printing company) all employed Cultural Revolution-style language to undermine the legitimacy of the colonial legal system. Wu claimed that he was a 'victim of political persecution' simply because he was 'patriotic to his country'. Chak said that 'seditious expressions are anti-persecution expressions', and it was 'an honour and glory' for him to aid the printing of the paper. Arguing that 'patriotism is no crime', Li complained that it was 'unjustifiable' for the police to arrest him 'in the middle of the night', searching his premises for an hour and scaring his children.⁶⁶ In this way, Wu, Chak, and Li turned the 'enemy's "court"' into a 'forum for exposing the crimes of British imperialism', according to an editorial in *Ta Kung Pao*.⁶⁷ In the process, they made themselves political martyrs. Nevertheless, on 29 August 1967, the three executives were all found guilty and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. *Afternoon News* and Nam Cheong Printing Company were each fined \$12,000, and the former was ordered to be suppressed for six months. Similar verdicts were passed in the trials of *Hong Kong Evening News* and *Tin Fung Yat Po* in early September.⁶⁸

Not only the five executives but also their supporters attending the trials performed an anti-colonial ritual in the courtroom. Following a directive from Beijing urging those who were 'illegally' convicted to 'protest loudly',⁶⁹ the leftist 'spectators' resorted to 'shouting protests' against the sentencing of their comrades.⁷⁰ Consequently, some of them received short-term prison sentences themselves for contempt of court.⁷¹ Other leftists were simply removed from the courtroom after they had refused to stand up at the time of the opening of proceedings.⁷²

The legal actions against the three 'fringe' communist newspapers, according to a report by the Hong Kong Police Special Branch in mid-October 1967, had had a 'restraining effect on the other six communist newspapers', as manifested in a 'marked change' in the tone of their articles which, 'although still seditious and inflammatory', were 'far milder' than they had been previously. Besides, the circulation of the communist newspapers had dropped to well below the pre-confrontation level, which showed that their 'repetitive

66 *South China Morning Post*, 29 August 1967.

67 *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報, 5 September 1967.

68 *South China Morning Post*, 7 September 1967; *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報, 8 September 1967.

69 *South China Morning Post*, 30 August and 6 September 1967.

70 Lo 羅海雷, *Wode fuqin Lo Fu* 我的父親羅孚, p. 138.

71 Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 1136, 30 July 1967; Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 1384, 14 September 1967; Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 1387, 14 September 1967, FCO 40/113 HWB14/32 Part A, TNA.

72 *South China Morning Post*, 2 September 1967.

anti-Government propaganda is being counter-productive'.⁷³ Governor Trench thus decided against taking action against the remaining, major communist papers.⁷⁴

By late December 1967, the Hong Kong government finally suppressed the leftist riots, which left fifty-one people dead and over 800 injured.⁷⁵ The majority of the Hong Kong people, be they refugees who had fled Communist China or locally born residents, who were used to a capitalist lifestyle, had chosen the 'lesser evil' of British colonial rule. After the failure of their highly militant propaganda during 1967, *Wen Wei Po*, *Ta Kung Pao*, and other leftist papers changed their tactics to win the public back by emphasizing local news, sports and entertainment. Such a change was consistent with Beijing's calls for 'united front' works by all leftist organizations in Hong Kong and with Mao Zedong's condemnation of Red Guard violence in China generally. By late 1968, the nine communist newspapers had a daily circulation of about 265,000 or nearly twenty per cent of all newspapers – a drop of nine per cent from the pre-confrontation figure.⁷⁶ Although the leftist papers had recovered some ground by moderating their approach, many Hong Kong people remained un-receptive to the appeal of the motherland embedded in their propaganda. On the other hand, Governor Trench (and since November 1971 Murray MacLehose) responded to the 1967 riots by fostering a sense of 'civic pride' among the Hong Kong people through expansion of social services, accelerated economic development, and co-optation of local elites to consultation bodies. In the course of the 1970s, the Hong Kong residents gradually developed a local identity, identifying themselves with capitalist Hong Kong. While being unable to eliminate the 'everyday propaganda' of China and its local agents, the British had won the confidence or at least acquiescence of the Hong Kong population.

6 Conclusion

Propaganda was part and parcel of the global (and local) Cold War. After 1949, Hong Kong became a key site for the production and dissemination of pro-Beijing propaganda by the local NCNA and the leftist newspapers. The 'everyday

73 Report by Hong Kong Police Special Branch, 19 October 1967, enclosed in Holmes to Galsworthy, 16 November 1967, FCO 40/114 HWB14/32 Part B, TNA.

74 Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 1328, 31 August 1967; Hong Kong to Commonwealth Office, no. 1358, 8 September 1967, FCO 40/113 HWB14/32 Part A, TNA.

75 Cheung, *Hong Kong's Watershed*, pp. 223–224.

76 Report by Hong Kong Police Special Branch, 'Chinese Communist Press Machine in Hong Kong – Its Scope and Its Impact', 21 November 1968, FCO 40/222 HKK13/11, TNA.

propaganda' of the left wing was routine and repetitive, and yet imbued with symbolic meaning. Embedded in the leftists' criticisms of the Hong Kong and British governments were the political messages of 'patriotism', 'anti-persecution', and China's 'sovereignty' over Hong Kong. During the leftist riots in 1952 and especially in 1967, the tone of *Ta Kung Pao* and *Wen Wei Po* became highly inflammatory and libellous, thus prompting the Hong Kong government to bring the publishers of selected leftist newspapers to trial. The accused and their supporters attending the trial, in response, turned the courtroom into a site of political propaganda. With Anglo-Chinese diplomatic relations and Hong Kong's vulnerability in mind, the British sought to strike a balance between maintenance of law and order and freedom of the press. Thus, after demonstrating its firmness against sedition, the Hong Kong government dropped the trials of *Wen Wei Po* and *New Evening Post* in 1952, while carefully avoiding taking on the main communist papers and the NCNA in 1967. In short, the Hong Kong and British governments needed to seek mutual accommodation and perform a balancing act with China and its local agents in the Cold War.

The case of Sino-British relations in Hong Kong has parallels with the Cold War in Europe. As Mary L. Dudziak argues, 'trials are a site of diplomatic history'. The Nuremberg trials between 1945 and 1949, in which the Allies prosecuted German leaders for their crimes during the Second World War, for example, created 'legal spaces between nations' or 'contact zones within which legal and national identities are constructed and contested'.⁷⁷ As this chapter has shown, the courtroom in Hong Kong became a site where the left wing/China clashed with the colonial authorities/Britain over the issue of sovereignty and national identity. The defence team for *Ta Kung Pao* in 1952, and the accused of the three minor communist newspapers in 1967, contested the legality of the trial and emphasized their 'patriotism' to China, which indisputably possessed sovereignty over Hong Kong. By so doing, the Hong Kong leftists aimed to construct and assert a Chinese identity in opposition to imperialist Britain.

The 'everyday propaganda' of the Hong Kong leftist press and NCNA bears a resemblance to the Cold War culture of the French and Italian Communist Parties. The propaganda of the two Western European parties stressed the themes of anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, defence of 'national independence', and peace with the Soviet Union. Yet, like their counterpart in Hong Kong, they achieved limited success, for anti-communism was the majority view in France

77 Mary L. Dudziak, 'Legal History as Foreign Relations History', in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 3rd ed., edited by Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 140.

and Italy. Even the French and Italian workers did not necessarily look to the Soviet Union as a model for them.⁷⁸ This brings us to the final point about the parallels between Hong Kong and Europe.

The cultural Cold War in Europe, according to Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, was 'not a story of winners and losers', but one that involved 'cultural adaptation and rejection'.⁷⁹ Notwithstanding the preponderant power of the United States, the spread of American culture to Western Europe should not be seen as U.S. 'cultural imperialism', but rather as 'a multifaceted process of negotiation among ethnic, regional, and national groups'.⁸⁰ That is to say, Western Europeans imitated, adapted, and rejected American ideas and values in accordance with their own national interests. On the other hand, the Sovietization of Eastern Europe after 1945 could not prevent Eastern Europeans from receiving American popular culture (like music and films), a gradual embrace that ultimately contributed to the collapse of communism there. Although, after 1949, Hong Kong existed in the shadow of Communist China, Beijing's propaganda machine found it difficult to foster a sense of Chinese nationalism among the bulk of the Hong Kong population. That said, given Hong Kong's economic and cultural links with the mainland, the British were acutely aware that China's influence was a fact of everyday life that could only be contained, but not eliminated. In the cultural Cold War, Britain and China negotiated and contested the space of Hong Kong on a daily basis.

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78 Marc Lazar, 'The Cold War Culture of the French and Italian Communist Parties', in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960*, edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 213–224.

79 Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, 'Culture and the Cold War in Europe', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1, edited by Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 418.

80 Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, 'Nation Branding', in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, edited by Costigliola and Hogan, p. 236.

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PART 3

***Eastern Europe and China: National Interests
and Ideology***



‘Our friendship is longer than the river Yangtze and higher than the Tatra Mountains’: Sino-Czechoslovak Trade in the 1950s

Jan Adamec

1 Introduction

During the 1950s, Czechoslovak diplomacy framed the People's Republic of China (PRC) as one of the biggest and most populous countries in the world to have had a successful communist revolution. According to this view, the PRC had set out on an enormous transformation from feudal backwardness to socialist modernity. There were important motivations for Czechoslovak leaders to aim for closer ties with China. When one examines the country's situation across the backdrop of the ideological and geopolitical limitations of the Cold War, one of the main challenges its political authorities faced after 1948 was the difficulty in limiting exposure to the West. From their perspective, reorienting the economy towards the East could thus prove to be a winning move. In this respect, trade with the PRC seemed to offer a unique opportunity.

The relations between Czechoslovakia and the PRC in the 1950s were multifaceted, reaching from cultural diplomacy, scientific exchange, important trade relations, political consultations on key foreign policy and international communist issues to military assistance. They were largely, but not exclusively, determined by the relationship between China and the Soviet Union and the increasing conflicts between the two communist powers after 1958.¹

1 On the People Republic of China (PRC)'s foreign relations during this period, see in particular Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945–1957* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–62* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Alexander V. Pantsov and Steven I. Levine, *Mao: The Real Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012); Alexander V. Pantsov and Steven I. Levine, *Deng Xiaoping: A Revolutionary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Andrew G. Walder, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); John W. Garver, *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

This decade of intensive Sino-Czechoslovak relations has, however, attracted only limited attention in the scholarship so far. Nevertheless, several important works that shed light on this period have been published by Czech and Slovak scholars. Hana Suchá and Lenka Dřimalová have written on Sino-Czechoslovak cultural exchanges and cultural diplomacy, while Martin Slobodník and Viera Lelkesová have analysed travel accounts written by Czech and Slovak writers and journalists about the PRC.² Meanwhile, the ideological and political implications of the Sino-Soviet dispute on the Czechoslovak Communist Party have been studied by Daniela Kolenovská.³ On the subject of Sino-Czechoslovakian trade relations, the publications of two authors must be mentioned: Lenka Krátká, who has studied the history of the Czechoslovak Maritime Shipping Company during the Cold War, devoting a substantial part of her work to the Sino-Czechoslovak cooperation in shipping;⁴ and Aleš Skřivan, who has focused on trade relations between China and Czechoslovakia from 1918 onwards.⁵ Skřivan argues that the 1950s were not only marked by a rapid growth in economic contacts, essentially due to favourable political conditions and the absence of any significant western competition, but also by

- 2 Hana Suchá, 'Armádní umělecký soubor Víta Nejedlého v Čínské lidové republice v roce 1952 / The Vít Nejedlý's Artistic Company of the Czechoslovak Army in the People's Republic of China in 1952', *Dálný východ / Far East* 3, no. 1–2 (2013): pp. 94–116; Martin Slobodník and Viera Lelkesová, "Ako rybky v akváriu" – nepublikovaný strojopis Milana Ferka o ceste do Číny v decembri 1964 / "Like a Fish in an Aquarium" – an unpublished article of Milan Ferko about his journey to China in December 1964, *Studia Orientalia Slovaca* 13, no. 2 (2014): pp. 209–272. See also Martin Slobodník, 'Socialist Anti-Orientalism: Perceptions of China in Czechoslovak Travelogues from the 1950s', in *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*, edited by Dobrota Pucherová, and Róbert Gáfrík (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 299–314; Lenka Dřimalová, *Česko-čínské vztahy po roce 1945 v oblasti kultury / Czech-Chinese Cultural Relations after 1945*, unpublished BA thesis (Olomouc: Department of Asian Studies, Palacký University, 2009), p. 22.
- 3 Daniela Kolenovská, 'Mezi dvěma slunci: Československo ve střetu Moskvy a Pekingu o mezinárodní komunistické hnutí (1953–1962) / Between Two Suns: Czechoslovakia in between Moscow and Beijing's Quest for Dominance in the International Communist Movement (1953–1962)', *Soudobé dějiny / Contemporary History*, no. 4 (2014): pp. 531–558. See also the author's article on cooperation within the agricultural sector: Daniela Kolenovská, 'Sino-Czechoslovak Cooperation on Agricultural Cooperatives: the Twinning Project', *Cold War History* (2017), DOI : 10.1080/14682745.2017.1387775.
- 4 Lenka Krátká, *A History of the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping Company, 1948–1989: How a Small, Landlocked Country Ran Maritime Business during the Cold War* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2015); Lenka Krátká, *Domovský přístav Praha: Československá námořní plavba v letech 1948 až 1989* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Karolinum, 2016).
- 5 Aleš Skřivan, *Československý vývoz do Číny 1918–1992 / Czechoslovak export to China 1918–1992* (Prague: Scriptorium, 2009). For an English version of his work see Aleš Skřivan, *From the Heart of Europe to the Middle Kingdom: Three Historical Eras in the "Chinese trade" of Czech and Czechoslovak Companies* (Hamburg: Dobu Verlag, 2016).

difficult negotiations, rising transport costs, and the gradual replacement of Czechoslovak supplies by China's domestic production.⁶

This chapter further develops Skřivan's argumentation by analysing the strategies adopted by Czechoslovak leaders to enter the vast Chinese market during the pivotal period of the second half of the 1950s. Based on a vast corpus of Czechoslovak archival documents,⁷ it will analyse the difficulties encountered by Czechoslovak authorities in their trade negotiations with the PRC in concluding long-term trade agreements and securing future economic cooperation. The Sino-Soviet split and the PRC's internal turmoil, which largely resulted from the rapid industrialisation attempt carried out in the framework of the Great Leap Forward, increasingly strained Sino-Czechoslovak political and, subsequently, economic relations. Nevertheless, Czechoslovak politicians and foreign trade experts continued to frame the PRC as one of the key components in the Czechoslovak foreign trade network. They tried to find a middle path between the unique political and ideological relations of the USSR and the PRC, and their own intense desire to explore the vast export opportunities the huge Chinese market seemed to offer.

2 The Breakthrough in 1956 and 1957

After the USSR and together with the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Czechoslovakia was among the first of the Soviet bloc states to not only establish diplomatic relations, but also to conclude a trade agreement with the PRC, which it did in 1950.⁸ This pattern was then followed first by Hungary and Poland in 1951, and then by Bulgaria and Romania in 1952.⁹ These agreements

6 Skřivan, *From the Heart of Europe*, pp. 281–282.

7 The chapter draws primarily on archival documents from the Czechoslovak government (The Office of the Government Bureau – Common Registry 1945–1959, hereafter OGB – CR 1945–1959), the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party stored in the National Archive, particularly the agenda of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (hereafter P B CC CPC) and the CC CPC First Secretary's office (hereafter CC – CC CPC ISO II), particularly boxes 82, 83 and 84, which contain the files on the Czechoslovak governmental delegation's visit to the PRC, Vietnam, North Korea and Mongolia between 8 March and 10 April 1957, as well as the visit of the Czechoslovak state and Party delegation to the PRC between 27 September and 7 October 1959.

8 Pravoslav Kautský, *Čínská lidová republika: Hospodářský vývoj a obchod s ČSR / The People's Republic of China: Economic Development and Trade with Czechoslovakia* (Praha: SNPL, 1960), pp. 95–96.

9 Alexander Eckstein, *Communist China's Economic Growth and Foreign Trade: Implications for U.S. Policy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book, 1966), p. 140. See also William C. Kirby, 'China's Internationalization in the Early People's Republic: Dreams of a Socialist World Economy', in

were signed in the first phase of New China's economic restructuring before the leadership formally embraced a Soviet-style centrally planned economy. The First Five-Year-Plan (FFYP) was launched in 1953. While the FFYP (1953–1957) was largely successful and was celebrated for bringing about a huge expansion in industrial production, the start of the Second Five-Year-Plan (1958–1962) coincided with the launch of the Great Leap Forward. Therefore, the plan had to undergo adjustments to face the disastrous outcome of the campaign. As this chapter will further show, the Czechoslovaks were not well informed about the situation of the Chinese economy. For Czechoslovak leaders, the prospect of mutual trade seemed to be more than promising.¹⁰ The PRC was rich in raw materials, possessed large reserves of coal, iron ore, tungsten, copper and antimony. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, was a highly industrialized state with relatively few natural resources. These considerations led Czechoslovak politicians to propose their country as a long-term investor, a contractor for building factories and huge technological complexes, and a promoter of socialist values through know-how, technology, and cultural transfer.¹¹ It was planned that the East European country would import raw materials, then produce machinery and complex industrial units (CIU),¹² export them to the PRC, and thereby assist the Chinese in building a modern socialist economy.

During the years following the 1950 trade agreement, Sino-Czechoslovak trade rose steadily (with the exception of 1952), with annual new trade agreements being concluded over this period.¹³ At the end of the 1950s, the PRC was Czechoslovakia's third most important trading partner, following the Soviet Union and the GDR.¹⁴ Czechoslovakia, meanwhile, was the PRC's third most important foreign trading partner among the East European countries, measured in the percentage of the total share. In 1959, Czechoslovakia's share

The History of the PRC (1949–1976), *The China Quarterly Special Issues, New Series*, no. 7, edited by Julia Strauss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 30.

¹⁰ See Zhang Shuguang, 'Sino-Soviet Economic Cooperation', in *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–1963*, edited by Odd Arne Westad (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 189–225.

¹¹ NA, CC – CC CPC FSO II, f. 1261/0/44, box 85, i.n. 124. *The Relations Between Czechoslovakia and the PRC (Trade relations)*. See also Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 233, p. 239.

¹² Complex industrial units (CIU) are factories or power plants, or substantial parts of them, such as chemical plants, metallurgical plants (rolling mills), textile plants, cement plants, ceramic and woodworking plants. Czechoslovakia was contracted to produce each component of these CIU, complete them (or provide assistance in completion) on the spot and make them operational. See Kautský, *The People's Republic of China*, pp. 96–97.

¹³ Eckstein, *Communist China's Economic Growth*, p. 146.

¹⁴ Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 239. See also Skřivan, Jr., 'Czechoslovak Economic Relations', p. 313.

was thus 4.6 per cent, with only the GDR's (5.2 per cent) and the USSR's shares (48.6 per cent) surpassing it.¹⁵ Czechoslovakia's key export item was machinery, which rose from 61 per cent of overall Czechoslovak exports to the PRC in 1950 to 86 per cent in 1957.¹⁶ Another substantial category of Czechoslovak exports to China during this period consisted of Czechoslovak military equipment, arms and ammunition, something in which the PRC was very interested, especially during the Korean War.¹⁷

Despite these consistent exchanges of goods between Czechoslovakia and China during the 1950s, Czechoslovak trade representatives and experts were not satisfied with the state of the trade relations. They believed that one of the key problems was the fact that Sino-Czechoslovak trade was regulated by short-term, one-year trade agreements with payment carried out through clearing accounts.¹⁸ These agreements created disadvantageous conditions for Czechoslovak exports composed mostly of industrial products with a production cycle longer than six months or even twelve months. This posed the risk of having machines which were already contracted and were in the process of being manufactured but which were not included in the next trade agreement. It also put Czechoslovak producers under pressure and sometimes resulted in their failure to meet the shortened delivery deadlines. Business with the PRC turned out to be 'risky as well as inefficient' for Czechoslovak industrial producers.¹⁹

Czechoslovak officials also pointed out that possible failure to meet the delivery deadlines for CIUs or their spare parts would hamper the development of the Chinese economy and make future negotiations even more difficult.²⁰ As Alexander Eckstein puts it, the annual agreements introduced elements of unpredictability and primarily benefited the PRC, not Czechoslovakia, by allowing the former to change the list of goods needed, their volume and delivery schedules, and use foreign trade as a 'cushion' for the shortcomings of its own internal economic policies.²¹ It was also noted that the PRC's representatives were often not able to present their demands for Czechoslovak machinery exports on time, and therefore production and export schedules could not be

15 Eckstein, *Communist China's Economic Growth*, p. 140.

16 NA, OGB – CR 1945–1959, f. 315/1, b. 2349, i.n. 7021.

17 Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 243.

18 For a general introduction to the mechanism of mutual trade agreements see for example George Ginsburgs, *The Legal Framework of Trade Between the USSR and the People's Republic of China* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), pp. 44–64.

19 Skřivan, *From the Heart of Europe*, pp. 273–274.

20 Kautský, *The People's Republic of China*, p. 98.

21 Eckstein, *Communist China's Economic Growth*, pp. 140–141.

properly planned and finished.²² In addition, the PRC's representatives were not clear enough about their future goals and it was therefore not possible to conclude any agreement on exports beyond the horizon of 1962.²³ Thus, the main difficulty in switching to 'broader forms of industrial cooperation' was aligning the PRC's needs stemming from the 'stormy development of Chinese industrial and agricultural production' with Czechoslovak export and import capabilities.²⁴ The main goal of Czechoslovak foreign trade negotiators thus became to persuade their Chinese counterparts to conclude long-term trade agreements, which the PRC refused to do until the mid-1950s.

There is some uncertainty as to which trade agreement should be considered the first long-term agreement in the history of Sino-Czechoslovak trade relations. Skřivan argues that 'in some regards' the agreement covering trade relations between the Czechoslovak Republic and the PRC for the period of 1958 to 1962, signed on 4 July 1956 in Beijing, could be considered the first long-term agreement.²⁵ George Ginsburgs also lists this agreement as the PRC's first ever long-term trade agreement.²⁶ However, by the end of 1956, the PRC was already signalling that it would like to decrease the previously-agreed trade volume by half and get back to the usual single-year schedule.²⁷ As we will see, it was only three years later, in April 1959, that the first actual and lasting long-term trade agreement was signed between the two countries, which would be reflected in the official annals of Czechoslovak foreign trade history.²⁸

But despite the uncertainty of the 1956 agreement, the overall situation was improving in 1957. On 8 March 1957, a governmental delegation headed by Prime Minister Viliam Široký flew to Beijing for an official visit. With him were Otakar Šimůnek, the Head of the State Planning Office (SPO); Oldřich Černík, Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (CC CPC) Secretary; Václav David, Minister of Foreign Affairs (MoFA); Július Ďuriš, Minister of Finance (MoF); and Otto Kocour, First Deputy to the Minister of Foreign Trade (MoFT).²⁹ In his welcome speech, the Chairman of the State Council, Zhou

22 NA, CC – CC CPC FSO II, f. 1261/0/44, box 82, i.n. 122. *The Development and Problems of Sino-Czechoslovak Relations*, no date.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 238. Skřivan, *From the Heart of Europe*, pp. 273–274.

26 This agreement was followed by the long-term trade agreements signed by the PRC with Bulgaria in 1957, and later those with Poland, Hungary, Romania, Albania and the GDR between 1958 and 1960. See Ginsburgs, *The Legal Framework of Trade*, p. 70.

27 Skřivan, *From the Heart of Europe*, p. 274.

28 Ibid.

29 'Odlet čs. vládní delegace / The departure of the Czechoslovak governmental delegation', *Rudé právo*, 9 March 1957, p. 1.

Enlai, stated, among other praise, that '[...] the people of Czechoslovakia and its government provide us with great help in building a socialist society. The Czechoslovak professionals who are staying with us now are proof of this help'. On other occasions, while accompanying the Czechoslovak delegation, Zhou was quoted as praising the level and quality of mutual trade: 'Czechoslovakia has provided us with great assistance by delivering us large machines [...] as well as by sending us their experts to provide us with progressive scientific and technical experience'.³⁰

When a correspondent of the Czechoslovak Communist Party's official daily *Rudé právo* conducted a review of the PRC's press, he noted a vast amount of news stories focused on Czechoslovak industrial and technological assistance in delivering, building and operating power stations and factories, as well as transferring knowledge and experience. He proudly quoted the editorial of the daily *Da gongbao*, 'Škoda buses run everywhere in our cities and Tatra-111 and Praga V3S trucks ply the road from Lanzhou to Lhasa'.³¹ The Czechoslovak prime minister, meanwhile, returned Zhou's praise and painted a rosy picture of mutual trade relations, stressing the fivefold increase in the volume of goods exchanged since 1950. He said, 'We are proud that Czechoslovakia and its people are allowed to contribute [...] to the enthusiastic efforts of the Chinese people to transform the country into an industrially advanced socialist powerhouse'.³² The PRC's press was also quoted as saying that 'Czechoslovak imports to China contributed to the fact that the construction of socialism in China was not compromised by embargo'.³³

At the end of the visit, a treaty on friendship and cooperation, as well as a treaty on cultural cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the PRC, were signed in Beijing on 27 March 1957.³⁴ As the Czechoslovak National Assembly's

30 'Recepcce na počest čs. vládní delegace. Projev předsedy Státní rady Čou En-laje / A banquet in honour of the Czechoslovak governmental delegation. A speech by the Chairman of the State Council, Zhou Enlai', *Rudé právo*, 11 March 1957, p. 1.

31 'Naše přátelství je delší než řeka Jance a vyšší než Tatry / Our friendship is Longer than the River Yangtze and Higher than the Tatra Mountains', *Rudé právo*, 10 March 1957, p. 1.

32 'Čs. vládní delegace na zasedání ceslostátního výboru Čínského lidového politického poradního sboru / Czechoslovak governmental delegation at a Convention of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference', *Rudé právo*, 13 March 1957, p. 1.

33 Jiří Jakoubek, 'Přátelství od Šumavy až k břehům Tichého oceánu / A Friendship from the Šumava Mountains to the Shores of the Pacific Ocean', *Rudé právo*, 15 March 1957, p. 3.

34 The National Assembly gave consent for these treaties on 4 July 1957, the President ratified them on 23 July 1957, and they came into force on 1 August 1957. See 'The Czechoslovak National Assembly's Foreign Committee report on the governmental draft in which it presents The Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the PRC, signed in Beijing on March 27, 1957, to the National Assembly to approve it (Print

rapporteur stated upon opening the discussion on the ratification process of the treaty on friendship and cooperation, 'The Czechoslovak people are proud of the fact that, since the first days of the victory of the Chinese people, we have been able to establish a versatile friendship with People's China, which we develop and deepen through this treaty'.³⁵ Both parties agreed to participate in all international efforts that would strive to secure world peace and security in line with the principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as to consolidate and develop friendly relations and fraternal cooperation, expand cultural relations, and provide each other with mutual assistance in developing scientific and technological progress. In article 4, both parties specifically declared that they would assist each other in developing comprehensive economic cooperation, beneficial to both parties, in the interest of peaceful development.³⁶

However, at the same time Prime Minister Široký was complaining in internal discussions of the Politburo of the CC CPC that further development of economic relations with the PRC was being hindered by a lack of clarity in Chinese trade plans, with no final plan in sight before the end of 1957, or possibly the beginning of 1958.³⁷ For example, in November 1956, the PRC had declared it was only interested in half of the already agreed-upon imports, causing complications for the Czechoslovak industry. Due to the lack of clarity in investment plans, Czechoslovak deliveries of machinery products to the PRC were halted, as were imports of raw materials and metals from China. Despite this, Široký indicated Czechoslovakia's continued willingness to broaden the mutual exchange of goods and cultivate trade contacts within the PRC in order to secure stable and long-term export and import relations.

For Široký, trade relations with China had a broader significance for overall Czechoslovak foreign trade policy. He hoped the improvement of trade relations with such a powerful socialist country as the PRC would help reverse the trend of Czechoslovakia's increasing trade relations with capitalist states, which resulted in balance of payments deficits. Široký also suggested

162'), 4 July 1957, <<http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1954ns/stenprot/019schuz/so19002.htm>> [accessed 1 February 2018]. For the complete text of the treaty, see 'Smlouva o přátelství a spolupráci mezi ČSR a ČLR / The Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the PRC', in *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky 1945–1960 / The Documents of the Czechoslovak Foreign Policy 1945–1960*, edited by Václav Kotyk (Praha: SNPL, 1960), pp. 197–199.

35 The Czechoslovak National Assembly's Foreign Committee report.

36 Kotyk, *Dokumenty*, pp. 197–199.

37 NA, CC – CC CPC FSO II, f. 1261/0/44, box 83, i.n. 123. *Report on Party negotiations during the visit of the Czechoslovak governmental delegation to the People's Democracies in the Far East*, 23 April 1957.

that economic relations with the People's Republic and other friendly Asian countries should not be based solely on bilateral agreements, but should be addressed collectively within the Soviet bloc, with the Asian countries possibly entering the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON).³⁸ Široký argued that a purely bilateral approach was almost impossible without a concerted effort within the socialist camp towards coordination, mainly focused on the costly investment necessary to gain access to the Asian countries' natural resources and the improvement of poor transportation lines. Giving his final evaluation of the Sino-Czechoslovak economic and trade negotiations, Široký admitted that the negotiations did not bring any immediate results, but insisted that there remained the prospect of vast future trade opportunities.³⁹

The Chinese negotiators confirmed that some complaints about Chinese shortcomings in bilateral trade relations were substantiated. In a frank statement, Zhou said, 'It became evident this year that we planned badly last year'.⁴⁰ In conversations with his Czechoslovak counterparts in March 1957, Zhou admitted that unless the PRC's second five-year plan was finalised, it would be difficult for his government even to think about broadening foreign trade and industrial cooperation.⁴¹ Based on this assessment, he also declined the establishment of a joint Sino-Czechoslovak business committee, which the Czechoslovaks thought would ease mutual negotiations and planning. It was obvious that the Chinese were reluctant to provide any binding commitment to future business cooperation beyond the agreements already signed.

At the conclusion of these conversations with Zhou, the Czechoslovak negotiators were confronted with two worrying issues. Firstly, it appeared that the PRC planned to produce some of the products and items it had been importing from Czechoslovakia by 1960, would be able to do so, and would probably shorten the list of items imported from the Soviet bloc countries, thus decreasing its dependency on the import of high value-added products from Czechoslovakia. Secondly, it became apparent that the Chinese planners and experts were still in the process of 'studying' the needs of the Chinese economy, and were therefore not able to provide any precise plan for the time being.⁴²

38 This was something the PRC tried to avoid and, despite holding observer status, the PRC never joined the organisation; see Eckstein, *Communist China's Economic Growth*, p. 140.

39 Ibid.

40 NA, CC – CC CPC FSO II, f. 1261/0/44, box 83, i.n. 123. *Report on negotiation with Zhou Enlai*, 12 March 1957.

41 Ibid. For the PRC's internal policy context and the dispute between Zhou Enlai's position and Zhu De's policy of 'large imports, large exports', see Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine*, p. 11.

42 NA, CC – CC CPC FSO II, f. 1261/0/44, box 83. *Report on the meeting with Comrade Zhou Enlai in Hanzhou*, 22 March 1957.

3 1959: the Peak of Sino-Czechoslovak Relations

The preparations for the PRC's Second Five-Year Plan began at the eighth Congress of the Communist Party of China in 1956. The plan's main objective – to increase agricultural production – would enable China to satisfy its domestic market and gain resources for export and industrial development; already in 1959, however, agricultural production had started to decrease for different reasons, notably as a consequence of the economic, political and societal mobilisation which was launched as the Great Leap Forward.⁴³ Still, the year 1959 was marked by the momentum generated by 'all-out mobilization of labour, capital, and raw materials',⁴⁴ and a short-lasting improvement of Sino-Soviet relations, resulting in a sharp increase in Sino-Soviet trade.⁴⁵

These developments influenced the Sino-Czechoslovak relationship and 1959 marked the peak of mutual relations. Intense exchanges took place especially in the area of cultural and scientific relations, such as the arrival of a delegation of Chinese cultural workers in January, the participation of a Czechoslovak marionette company in the PRC's anniversary celebration three months later, followed by the visit of a Czechoslovak song and dance company to Beijing in May. Other marking events in 1959 included the signing of an agreement between television companies and the arrival of a Chinese military goodwill mission in May. In October of the same year, an exhibition commemorating a decade of socialist development in the PRC opened in Prague.⁴⁶ A high-profile Czechoslovak delegation visited the PRC from 27 September to 7 October 1959, and participated in the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the country, led by President and First Secretary of the CC CPC Antonín Novotný, accompanied by Minister of the Interior Rudolf Barák, Minister of Foreign Affairs Václav David, and Czechoslovak Envoy to the PRC Ján Bušniak.

In the area of trade relations, it was in April 1959 that Czechoslovak officials finally managed to persuade Beijing to sign a long-term trade agreement for the years 1960, 1961, and 1962. However, the conclusion of the agreement was made possible only by accepting the Chinese demand to include deliveries of just 60 per cent of the expected overall exchange of goods, causing problems in reserving the production capacities for overall Czechoslovak exports.⁴⁷ Czechoslovak experts also identified transportation as the Achilles' heel of

43 See Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, pp. 201–203.

44 Ibid., p. 203.

45 See Zhang Shuguang, 'Sino-Soviet Economic Cooperation', p. 208, p. 212.

46 Dřimalová, *Czech-Chinese Cultural Relations*, p. 22.

47 Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 238.

mutual trade at the time, be it due to early booking of cargo freight space or rising overall transportation costs.⁴⁸ High transportation costs influenced overall profitability of certain exports. Czechoslovak officials suggested that this problem could be solved by three-party or multi-party transactions and co-operation with third markets; however, as noted, the PRC insisted on keeping the agreement strictly bilateral.⁴⁹ The future trade relations improved when a joint shareholder company, *Československá námořní plavba* (Czechoslovak Maritime Shipping) was established on 9 March 1959. The agreement followed The Protocol on Development of Sea Transportation which was signed in June 1953, a temporary directive on how to manage key issues of maritime transportation between Czechoslovakia and the PRC.⁵⁰ This was, according to Skřivan, 'a mutually beneficial project'.⁵¹

The negotiations leading up to the conclusion of the 1959 agreement had begun in the autumn of 1958, and given the magnitude of this agreement it is relevant to retrace the Sino-Czechoslovak talks leading to the agreement.⁵² Czechoslovak negotiators were primarily interested in importing raw materials such as oil and iron ore but, as Skřivan argues, they had to put up with limited drilling and extraction capacities and the overall backwardness of the Chinese extraction industry.⁵³ Due to the specific structure of the mutual trade framework, Czechoslovakia was sometimes 'forced' to import commodities it did not need or could have bought cheaper elsewhere.⁵⁴ Czechoslovak planners also noted that because of the low quality of Chinese iron ore, it would be necessary to import some 150,000 tonnes of it from capitalist markets, worsening the bilateral payments balance with these markets.

The problem was the structure of the Chinese exports to Czechoslovakia, consisting mainly of oil and fatty raw materials, rice, tobacco, meat, poultry,

48 NA, CC – CC CPC FSO II, f. 1261/0/44, box 82, i.n. 69. *The development and problems of Sino-Czechoslovak relations*, no date.

49 Ibid.

50 See also Krátká, *A History of the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping Company*, p. 53.

51 Based on the Protocol, the Chinese were allowed to sail their own ships under the Czechoslovak flag. Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 234. Czechoslovakia also assisted in the conclusion of certain secret financial transactions, establishing a sterling pound account in the Czechoslovak State Bank. Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 233.

52 NA, f. 02/2, vol. 203, a.u. 279, point 9., p. 1. *A procedure for negotiating with the People's Republic of China on long-term economic cooperation. Annex III: Theses – The issue of trade in political relations and economic cooperation with the People's Republic of China*. State Planning Office, Ref. 030 106/59, 2 February 1959, p. 1.

53 Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 244.

54 Ibid. See also NA, CC – CC CPC FSO II, f. 1261/0/44, b. 82, i.n. 69. *The development and problems of Sino-Czechoslovak relations*, no date.

rubber, sulphur, iron ore, pig iron, non-ferrous metals, and raw textile materials such as silk, cotton, wool, jute, leather and furs.⁵⁵ The PRC thus primarily offered food and fibre products, with food making up practically half of the overall exports from China to Czechoslovakia and raw materials making up 42 per cent.⁵⁶

As representatives of the MoFT noted, the Chinese negotiators had warned them that the exports of agricultural products would be gradually replaced by minerals in the coming years. Based on an exceptionally good harvest in 1958, however, the PRC would be able to meet Czechoslovak requirements to a large extent, even concerning agricultural products.⁵⁷ As for exports, huge differences arose between what the Chinese side demanded and what Czechoslovakia was able (and willing) to deliver. As the MoFT stated, Czechoslovakia could only satisfy a relatively small number of the Chinese demands during the 1958 negotiations. For example, the MoFT experts doubted that Czechoslovakia would be able to deliver 150,000 tonnes of warp material, including the 70,000 tonnes of rails the Chinese representatives demanded. Instead, the MoFT advised selling different kinds of products, such as lightweight machine tools, while recognising that the Chinese would probably accept this substitution only to a limited extent. The MoFT negotiators were instructed to push for the maximum export of engineering products and import of maximum quantities of raw materials and semi-finished products. A focus on such items would allow Czechoslovakia to curtail imports from the capitalist states and thus transfer other export funds from the capitalist countries to the PRC.

However, the negotiations stalled due to the differing positions of the two parties, with the Chinese representatives substantially reducing the list of Chinese products to be exported to Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak negotiators were particularly dismayed because in July 1958, the Chinese had submitted requests and offered lists that seemed to satisfy Czechoslovak demands fully and promise great trade opportunities, and the Czechoslovaks had prepared the final negotiations based on these lists. However, when the final negotiations began in November 1958, the Chinese presented new proposals, substantially reducing the lists for both exports and imports. On the one hand, the new Chinese lists did not cover Czechoslovakia's import needs, particularly in pig iron, non-ferrous metals and fatty raw materials. For some items, such as cotton, wool, rubber, and asbestos, the Chinese side was not able to state its export possibilities at all at the beginning of the negotiations. On the other hand, the

55 NA, OGB – CR 1945–1959, f. 315/1. *The Ministry of Foreign Trade: the Draft of the Governmental Decision*, p. 12.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

proposed exports of some agricultural products, such as meat, poultry, tobacco and fish, were considerably higher than Czechoslovakia needed and was willing to absorb.⁵⁸

These disparities, as the Czechoslovak negotiators claimed, would seriously hamper the future development of the mutual exchange of goods up to 1962. The negotiated volume of Czechoslovak exports to the PRC for the period from 1959 to 1962 reached approximately CZK 1.2 billion, whereas the negotiated and agreed volume of Czechoslovak imports from the PRC was only CZK 416 million.⁵⁹ This meant that to arrive at balanced trade relations, the Chinese side would have to offer additional goods valued at 784 million CZK. Meanwhile, the report critically admitted that the Czechoslovak side had failed to meet some of the Chinese requirements regarding chemical and rolling equipment, heavy machine tools, compressors, rolled material, and forgings. Prime Minister Široký was quoted as saying, 'Even we do not fulfil our obligations', possibly to counter the thesis that the main difficulties were caused by the Chinese side.⁶⁰

Another problem was that the Chinese negotiators did not want to include some key items and products in the Czechoslovak export list, such as diesel engines, diesel generators, excavators, pumps, tractors, trucks, buses, and agricultural machinery. They wanted to adjust their demand for these products on a year-by-year basis to better attune their import to the needs of their economy. This was exactly what the Czechoslovak negotiators wanted to avoid, having been instructed to exert pressure on the Chinese side to specify their demands as precisely as possible for as long a period as possible. The reason was that CIU s and machinery in general had a long production cycle from purchasing materials to completion and trial operation, which had to be included in the five-year production plans.

Despite these difficulties, an agreement was reached between the two negotiating parties. The Czechoslovak representatives had been urged to push an initiative to overcome the current unsatisfactory state of negotiations and create prerequisites for establishing lasting and mutually beneficial cooperation over a longer period of time. Thus, on 12 February 1959, the Czechoslovak government presented a memorandum on the development of mutual economic cooperation to China,⁶¹ and a trade agreement was finally signed in April 1959.

58 Ibid., pp. 1–2.

59 Ibid., p. 2.

60 Ibid.

61 NA, OGB – CR 1945–1959, f. 315/1. *Usnesení 34. schůze politického byra ÚV KSČ ze dne 3.2.1959, K bodu: Postup jednání s Čínskou lidovou republikou o dlouhodobé hospodářské spolupráci (s. O. Šimůnek).* / *The decision of the 34th session of the PB CC CPC, 3 February*

Thus, the year 1959 was marked by the successful completion of a long-term Sino-Czechoslovak trade agreement in April and a successful visit by a high-ranking Czechoslovak delegation in October/November 1959. It was still too early for the growing disputes over ideological supremacy within the socialist camp and controversies over foreign policy and security issues between the USSR and the PRC to influence the thinking and everyday agenda of mid-level experts, planners, and MoFT professionals. They continued to envisage a bright, optimistic future of cooperation with the PRC. Their vision echoed the celebratory tone of the speech at the Czechoslovak National Assembly in 1957: 'The development of the Chinese national economy and its strength has endless prospects secured'.⁶² The MoFT experts argued that the first long-term agreement did not make use of all the possibilities of mutual economic relations in either its volume or its structure.⁶³ Ignoring the actual state of the PRC's economy, the Czechoslovaks wrongly imagined that the Great Leap Forward had been a success, and that it was still too soon for the results to manifest themselves fully. They argued that the current rate of growth of both industrial and agricultural production would not only allow the PRC to invest in raising its people's standard of living, but also to ensure further economic development. Furthermore, they foresaw that China's export capacity would grow correspondingly, and produce a 'great leap' in foreign trade in the coming years, which would benefit future long-term agreements between the two countries. Finally, the MoFT experts predicted that economic cooperation with the PRC would continue to be of growing importance in the 1960s, leading to the 'development of the production capacities of both countries, and thus to the strengthening of the entire socialist camp'.⁶⁴

As for Czechoslovakia's foreign trade prospects at the time, the perspectives and key patterns of mutual economic relations with the Soviet Union and other European people's democracies were clear up to 1965. Moreover, the preliminary discussions with the Soviet Union on some basic issues of long-term economic cooperation were even set up to the year 1975. However, the prospective cooperation with the PRC, which might possibly become one of the pillars of Czechoslovak foreign trade, was not defined in any clear terms.⁶⁵ So when the experts of the time were asked to paint a picture of the future of long-term Sino-Czechoslovak trade relations up to 1975, they used mostly rosy

1959 – a discussion point: *A procedure for negotiating with the People's Republic of China on long-term economic cooperation* (Com. O. Šimůnek).

62 The Czechoslovak National Assembly's Foreign Committee report.

63 Kautský, *The People's Republic of China*, p. 97.

64 Ibid., p. 97.

65 Ibid., p. 5.

colours. This optimism reflected the desire to transform the enormous and insatiable Chinese market into a key socialist trading partner and a substitute for the capitalist markets in both import and export. Yet the reality was very far from this vision. The decade of intensive bilateral relations, of which trade constituted a key pillar, was soon to be over.

4 Conclusion

Czechoslovakia managed to conclude a long-term trade agreement with China in 1959, but the planned positive effects of the treaty on long-term Czechoslovak industrial production planning were somewhat diminished by the fact that Czechoslovakia had to agree to deliver only 60 per cent of the expected overall exchange of goods.⁶⁶ Still, Czechoslovak trade relations with the PRC reached their zenith between 1957 and 1959, culminating in two high-profile visits by Czechoslovak politicians and party apparatchiks to the PRC. The trajectory and volume of mutual trade were in line with the development of overall Sino-Soviet trade relations. Despite difficulties during the negotiation process, the growing Sino-Soviet split, and the PRC's internal turmoil due to rapid industrialisation and the Great Leap Forward, Czechoslovak politicians, diplomats, and experts showed a strong interest in maintaining and developing bilateral relations. They kept on viewing the PRC as one of the future pillars of not only Czechoslovak, but also Soviet bloc trade relations. They still tried to find a middle path between the increasingly strained political and ideological relations of the USSR and the PRC, and their own intense desire to explore the vast export opportunities the huge Chinese market seemed to offer.

This optimism was in part due to the fact of how relatively little the Czechoslovak leaders knew about the inner workings of Chinese politics and society. Their only choices were to rely on Soviet sources, advisors and diplomats,⁶⁷ place their trust in Chinese officials who were obviously presenting only their side of the story, or obtain information through various Czechoslovak channels, diplomats, correspondents, and third-party sources. From reading the internal documents of the Czechoslovak Party leadership of the time concerning negotiations with the PRC, it seems that these Czechoslovak politicians were poorly informed about the real situation inside the PRC, and knew even less

66 Skřivan, *Czechoslovak Export*, p. 238.

67 Kolenovská, 'Between two suns', p. 547. As Kolenovská noted, Czechoslovakia's diplomatic staff for China was overburdened and understaffed, with only a few professionals mastering Chinese (which was also the result of post-1948 political purges).

about the details of the complicated interactions between Nikita Khrushchev and Mao Zedong that we know about today.

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Chipolbrok – Continuity in Times of Change: Sino-Polish Relations during the Cold War, 1949–1969

Margaret K. Gnoinska

1 Introduction

While the proclamation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) certainly sent shockwaves throughout the Western capitalist world, signalling the potential loss of China's highly coveted markets, nations like Poland in the Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe faced an opportunity to develop relations with the new member of the Socialist world. The creation of the PRC changed the Cold War dynamics; it connected the Soviet bloc nations with China, thereby expanding the communist international movement. As a consequence, relations between China and Eastern European countries, which were traditionally quite limited, began to grow quickly at party, state, military, cultural, and economic levels. China became a source of raw materials and foodstuffs for the Eastern Bloc, which in turn provided industrial products and technology for China.

In the case of Poland, bilateral relations were further strengthened in maritime affairs thanks to the Sino-Polish Joint Shipping Venture, dubbed Chipolbrok, which became the PRC's first foreign venture with each side holding fifty percent of controlling shares. This enterprise contributed to China's economic development, especially in the first half of the 1950s; it proved essential to shipping goods to and from China on vessels, which travelled under the Polish flag and thus moved more freely within the international waters. This proved to be crucial during the Korean War when the US and the United Nations (UN) tightened the economic embargo on China. While historians have given some attention to Chipolbrok recently, they have not analysed the venture's role within the context of the international communist movement and the Cold War, especially after China and the Soviet Union gradually began to part ways in the latter half of the 1950s.¹

¹ Zhang Shuguang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949–1963* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), p. 165; Lenka Krátká, *A History of the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping Company, 1948–1989: How a Small,*

Closer examination of Chipolbrok reveals that the venture served as a constant in the Sino-Polish relationship when state, party, economic, military, and cultural ties hit rock bottom once Poland officially sided with Moscow in the Sino-Soviet split. The available evidence suggests that despite their ideological differences China and Poland regarded the venture to be economically and politically useful. Chipolbrok's unbroken continuity served as a conduit for China to gain allies in competition with the USSR and to disseminate propaganda. It also allowed Warsaw some autonomy in interactions with Beijing and a stronger foothold in China vis-à-vis other Soviet bloc nations (except for Albania and Romania) during the Cultural Revolution. Maintaining a connection to China was important to the leadership under Władysław Gomułka, who believed that Poland would best thrive within a unified Socialist camp that included China. The Polish leader viewed China as indispensable both to Poland's limited autonomy and to a global competition with the capitalist West. The research for this chapter is primarily based on unpublished sources from the Polish Foreign Ministry Archives, which also contain records of the Ministry of Foreign Trade; the Communist Party records housed in the Archives of Modern Records; and materials from the Polish Institute of National Remembrance. In addition, the chapter uses recent secondary literature and document readers on Sino-Soviet and Sino-European relations. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on Sino-Polish maritime and economic cooperation in the 1950s, highlighting the origins of the venture, its role in sidestepping the US and the UN embargo, and contribution to China's economic development. The second part turns to examining the economic and political usefulness of the venture, which carried out its operations despite the Sino-Soviet split that deeply affected Beijing's relations with most Soviet bloc nations. The third part shows how Chipolbrok withstood the chaos and violence that swept the Chinese nation during the Cultural Revolution and how the venture's uninterrupted presence offered unique information gathering opportunities for Poland and propaganda outlets for China during this turbulent time.

Landlocked Country Ran Maritime Business During the Cold War (Stuttgart and Hanover: Ibidem Press, 2015), pp. 24, 46, 49, 51, 66–67; Tae-Woo Lee, Michael Roe, Richard Gray, and Mingnam Shen, eds., *Shipping in China* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 111–115. There has also been more interest recently in the Polish literature on Chipolbrok such as Janusz Wróbel, *Chipolbrok. Z dziejów polsko-chińskiego sojuszu morskiego 1950–1957* (Łódź: IPN, 2016). While the book provides interesting details on the origins and the early years, its main focus is social history, especially daily lives of Polish sailors, the relations between Polish and Chinese merchant marines, surveillance and ideological indoctrination of Chipolbrok's Polish staff, the defections of Polish sailors to the West, and the effects on their lives abroad and families.

2 Sino-Polish Maritime and Economic Cooperation in the 1950s

Chipolbrok was initially created to meet the growing commercial needs of the PRC and to help with circumventing the US (and later the UN) embargo, especially in the first half of the 1950s. The venture continued to play an important role in China's economic development even when dark clouds began to form over the Sino-Soviet relations (in the aftermath of Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956). In fact, in the latter half of the 1950s, Poland's trade with China grew steadily, reaching its peak in 1959, and the venture increased its vessels from nine in 1951 at 91,120 DWT² to eighteen by 1960 at 190,638 DWT.³ These developments indicate that Chipolbrok carried on even when change was looming over the slowly disintegrating international communist movement, in which Poland would officially side with Moscow and not with Beijing.

With the establishment of the PRC on 1 October 1949, Sino-Polish relations grew exponentially, as did relations between China and Eastern Europe, all in line with the deepening Sino-Soviet relationship. Soviet bloc nations replaced, at least for the time being, Western Europeans, Japanese, and Americans whose more than a century long presence dominated and humiliated China. This new dynamic of the Cold War offered an unprecedented opportunity for countries like Poland to expand their relations at party, state, military, cultural, and economic levels with the second largest and most populous Socialist nation in the world. The origins of Chipolbrok must therefore be understood within the context of the growing relationship between East Asia and the Soviet bloc.

Poland was the perfect candidate out of Eastern European nations to engage in a joint shipping venture with China, because it had a strong maritime tradition fortified by coastal access to the Baltic Sea following the end of the Second World War. It is still not clear whether Chipolbrok was a Polish, Chinese, or Soviet initiative. There is no evidence in the Polish documents to suggest that it was the Soviets who came up with the idea. In order to establish otherwise, we need access to the Russian archives to uncover the whole story. In all likelihood, even if the idea came from Warsaw, it would have had to go through the process of approval in Moscow, given Poland's very limited sovereignty at the time. Moreover, given Stalin's penchant for bilateral arrangements as opposed to multilateral mechanisms, it is possible that the idea originated with

2 DWT – Deadweight tonnage is a measure of how much mass a ship is carrying or can safely carry. DWT does not include the weight of the ship.

3 Michael Roe, 'Chinese-Polish Co-operation in Liner Shipping', in *Shipping in China*, edited by Tae-Woo Lee, *et al*, Ch. 8., pp. 117–118.

the Vozhd himself to control and exploit his allies.⁴ What we do know is that on 19 June 1950 (not on 26 June as some historians suggest),⁵ Polish diplomats in Beijing broached the idea of creating a joint shipping line, and the Chinese readily accepted.⁶ It is noteworthy that the proposal was made before the outbreak of the Korean War, and not because of it, as some would suggest,⁷ indicating that the aim was first and foremost to aid China with economic development and trade restrictions. Once the conflict engulfed the Korean Peninsula and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered the war, Chipolbrok took on both a political and economic purpose.

However, bilateral negotiations were lengthy and painstaking. The delegation headed by Deputy Minister of Sea Transport Leon Bielski spent nearly two months in Beijing, from October to late December 1950, negotiating the agreements. Polish communists recognized that although China was in dire need of economic and technological assistance, the nation was proud of shedding the century of foreign humiliation and exploitation. This is why some believed it to be their duty to 'fix the evil caused by the imperialists'.⁸ Whether truly driven by such ideals, the Poles were excited about 'enormous trade prospects' of obtaining rice, wheat, cotton, rubber, and copper in exchange for textiles, sugar, industrial machines and equipment.⁹ Opening a maiden shipping line to Asia could also elevate Poland's status on the international stage by casting it as little more than a Soviet satellite. At the same time, Poland was concerned about the safety of Chipolbrok ships operating exclusively under the Polish flag in the waters close to Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines.¹⁰ In addition, issues such as the methods of purchasing and registering the vessels contributed to stalling the negotiations.

The available evidence shows that Soviet pressure played a role in advancing the talks,¹¹ especially in light of the tightening of the US embargo on China

4 Laszlo G. Borhi, 'The Merchants of the Kremlin: The Economic Roots of Soviet Expansion in Hungary', Working Paper No. 28 (Washington D.C.: CWHIP, June 2000).

5 Wróbel, *Chipolbrok*, p. 142.

6 Top Secret Cable [hereafter TSC] Ambassador Juliusz Burgin (Polish Embassy in Beijing [hereafter PEB]) to Stefan Wierbłowski (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw [hereafter MFA]), 19 June 1950, AM SZ, z-6/77, w-26, t-256, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw [hereafter AM SZ].

7 Roe, 'Chinese-Polish Co-Operation', p. 111.

8 'Report No. 4 of the Governmental Delegation in China, Beijing', 21 December 1950, pp. 33–34, SWW, z-11, w-1, t-23, AM SZ [hereafter Report No. 4].

9 TSC, Urgent, Burgin (PEB) to Wierbłowski (MFA), 8 July 1950, z-6/77, w-26, t-256, AM SZ.

10 TSC, Bielski (PEB) to Popiel-Gede (MFA), 11 November 1950, z-6/77, w-26, t-256, AM SZ.

11 'Report No. 4', p. 31.

in mid-December 1950.¹² 'Moscow understands China's great role in the struggle against imperialism', the Soviet ambassador in Beijing stressed to the Polish delegates, 'and would not deny China anything'.¹³ The message was clear: more ships had to be made available to China. While Soviet pressure mattered, the Polish delegation's final report cast the venture not just as 'assistance to China, but trade that complemented each country's shortages'. The report echoed the need to help 'China with whatever it needed' and to 'expand maritime ties despite obstacles created by the imperialists', but it emphasized that China could soon become Poland's major trading and maritime partner. This implies Poland's desire to become economically stronger and less dependent on the USSR in case of a world war. 'We should remember that, as in the Second World War, it will be not the Far East, but Europe, where the showdown takes place'.¹⁴

The agreement to form the Sino-Polish Joint Shipping Venture was officially signed on 29 January 1951 in Beijing and went into effect in June of that year. Each side agreed to contribute six ships and establish head offices in Gdynia and Tianjin (later moved to Shanghai). The immediate task was to assist China with buying more ships, securing cargo, and training Chinese merchant marines in Poland.¹⁵ In order to help China circumvent the economic embargo which was intensified following the UN 500 (v) resolution on 18 May,¹⁶ the two sides agreed at their inaugural meeting on 15 June 1951 in Tianjin to keep the ownership of the Chinese ships confidential. To do so, the venture would appear simply as a shipping brokerage firm and Chipolbrok ships would officially belong to the Polish Ocean Lines, have Polish names, and operate under the Polish flag.¹⁷ In reality, it was a Sino-Polish venture, but one which faced challenges.

The procurement of ships was a daunting task, especially for the Chinese who were directly involved in the Korean War. The embargo applied to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was less restrictive than the one applied to China. However, it still made it difficult to obtain goods of direct military potential (embargoed) and items of indirect military potential (quantitatively controlled) from capitalist countries.¹⁸ This meant that, for example, obtaining

¹² Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, p. 31.

¹³ 'Note of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador Nikolai V. Roshchin and the Polish delegates on trade and maritime agreements', Beijing, 18 December 1950, pp. 68–69, SWW, z-11, w-1, t-23, AM SZ.

¹⁴ 'Report No. 4', pp. 33–34.

¹⁵ TSC, Burgin (PEB) to Wierbłowski (MFA), 6 June 1951, z-6/77, w-29, t-312, AM SZ.

¹⁶ U.N. Resolution 500 (v) Additional Measures to be Employed to Meet the Aggression in Korea. <<https://documents-ddsny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NRo/744/47/IMG/NR074447.pdf?OpenElement>>, accessed 13 September 2017.

¹⁷ Wróbel, *Chipolbrok*, p. 161.

¹⁸ Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, p. 24.

brand new ships of 10,000 DWT with a speed over ten knots from renowned shipyards in Western Europe was basically impossible for either the Poles or the Chinese. This is why the Chipolbrok fleet in 1952, which numbered ten vessels (each side provided five), consisted of ships that were built either prior to or during the Second World War, some of which had even previously been sunk or damaged.¹⁹ Even when the Chinese did manage to purchase ships, rename them, and place them under the Polish flag, the bill of sale posed a problem as it was difficult to keep it a secret. Therefore, sometimes the Polish side deliberately blew the cover as in the case of openly asking the China Merchants to charter the PRC ships (recovered from the British) on behalf of the Gdynia-America Line shipping agency.²⁰ The Poles did not want to take a risk of having Chinese-owned ships operate under the Polish flag in waters so close to Taiwan.²¹ In other cases, however, they acquiesced to China's innovative ways of camouflaging the origin of purchase. In 1951, the PRC purchased ships from Panama, which it officially registered with the Polish Ocean Lines, placing them under the Polish flag, and renaming the vessels. Chiang Kai-shek's navy captured one of these ships in 1953 precisely because the ship was Chinese-owned.²²

Finding and shipping merchandise that was not available in the Socialist world also posed challenges for Chipolbrok. The task was daunting, but not impossible, due to the loopholes in the UN embargo placed on China. Even though the US government wanted the embargo to be as multilateral as possible, the American government simply could not enforce it among its allies and other UN members to the extent that it desired. The only solution, and a drastic one, would be a naval blockade, an idea that was fiercely opposed by others, especially Britain given its presence in Hong Kong.²³ To be sure, most US allies complied with the embargo and some, including Denmark, Italy, Greece, and Norway, even went beyond its basic requirements.²⁴ Other countries, however, defied it. Naturally, Chipolbrok exploited this fact and targeted countries such as India, Indonesia, and Ceylon to obtain strategic materials for China such as rubber.²⁵

19 'Chińsko-Polskie Towarzystwo Maklerów Okrętowych', z-11 SWW, w-3, t-48, 1952, AM SZ, in Wróbel, *Chipolbrok*, pp. 166–169.

20 Wróbel, *Chipolbrok*, p. 168.

21 'Report No. 4', p. 21.

22 TSC, Foreign Minister Skrzyszewski (MFA) to Góra (PEB), 30 October 1953 and TSC, Śluczański (MFA) to Góra (PEB), 18 November 1953, z-6/77, w-40, t-432, AM SZ.

23 Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, pp. 35–41.

24 Ibid., p. 43.

25 TSC, Deputy Minister of Sea Transport Leon Bielski (MFA) to Dodin-Gronomicz (PEB), 22 December 1951, z-6/77, w-29, t-313 and TSC, Kiryluk (PEB) to Skrzyszewski (MFA), 20 December 1953, z-6/77, w-40, t-431, AM SZ.

Chipolbrok also engaged in trans-shipping and re-exporting goods and strategic materials from the West to China. The Polish government worked with communist parties in Western European countries such as Italy and Belgium to obtain embargoed materials – steel, ferroalloys, and metals such as copper, aluminium, nickel, cobalt, vanadium, titanium, tantalum, molybdenum, and beryl – to be shipped to China from the Polish ports. The process of operation was simple, but effective. For example, a Western European firm registered in Switzerland would be paid by Warsaw for an order to go to a capitalist or a neutral country. Subsequently, the merchandise would be sent to Gdynia where it was loaded on ships to China.²⁶ Clearly, the US was not able to control all trade with China.

The available evidence makes it hard to determine what military products the venture shipped to China during the Korean War. This is primarily due to the high level of secrecy of operations in contrast with those conducted via railways. The fragmented information suggests that trucks, ammunition, firearms, tires, engines, explosives, lathes, cement mixers, jackhammers, locomotives, medicines, and vaccines against typhus and cholera were transported to aid with the war effort.²⁷ It is clear, however, that the Poles understood that Chipolbrok was more than simply a merchant marine line.²⁸ The Chinese, too, cooperated with the Poles to ensure that fuel was obtained from Asian countries to guarantee shipments of petroleum, grain, rubber, rice, industrial products, textiles, office supplies, and bicycles, which were both important to the war and to China's economy.²⁹

Chipolbrok's operations, combined with a vibrant Sino-Polish trade, helped the newly formed PRC face the economic challenges. China became Poland's fourth trading partner after the USSR, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and Czechoslovakia.³⁰ In 1950, Poland ranked second among China's Eastern European trading partners, after a much less war-ravaged and more industrialized Czechoslovakia. Starting in 1951, when Chinese trade with capitalist nations began to wane, Poland was placed third after the GDR and Czechoslovakia (excluding the USSR which was indisputably China's number one trading partner) and maintained this position throughout the 1950s (except for 1952

26 Wróbel, *Chipolbrok*, pp. 181–182; p. 185.

27 TSC, Wierbłowski (MFA) to Burgin (PEB), 30 April 1951, AM SZ, z-6/77, w-29, t-313; Wróbel, *Chipolbrok*, pp. 180, 185–186, 490.

28 TSC, Dodin (PEB) to Wierbłowski-Bielski (MFA), 12 August 1951, z-6/77, w-29, t-312, AM SZ.

29 TSC, Bielski (PEB) to Minc (MFA), 17 November and 15 December 1950, z-6/77, w-26, t-256; Urgent, TSC, Kusto (PEB) to Bajer (MFA), 2 August 1951, z-6/77, w-29, t-312; TSC, Skrzyszewski (MFA) to Góra (PEB), 30 October 1953, z-6/77, w-40, t-432, AM SZ.

30 Wróbel, *Chipolbrok*, p. 193.

and 1953 when it was just edged out of its spot by Hungary).³¹ Only Hong Kong and Great Britain, both of which opposed the multilateral embargo, superseded Eastern European nations until 1954.³²

Poland and China continued to expand their relations following Khrushchev's Secret Speech of 1956, which unleashed crises in Poland and Hungary and sent shockwaves throughout the Socialist world. Although scholars continue to debate the role of China in Moscow's decision not to intervene militarily in Poland in 1956, Beijing saw its role as decisive.³³ Whether the Gomułka leadership truly believed that China 'saved' Poland is still unclear, but the fact remains that bilateral party relations grew closer than ever. This was reflected in Zhou Enlai's visit to Poland in 1957 followed by the visit of Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz to China the same year. Warsaw found it beneficial to nurture relations with China so as not to depend solely on Moscow, as its relations with Moscow, while stable, were still tenuous. Given this state of affairs, the Sino-Polish economic and maritime cooperation was close and strengthened by long-term contracts. For example, according to the 1957 agreements, Poland would supply China with ships (often around 10,000 DWT), complete factories, and the equipment to support the development of China's heavy and military industry.³⁴ The Chinese supplied Poland with strategic materials such as tungsten, tin, molybdenum, oil seeds, cotton, canned meats, fish, and fruit.³⁵ Bilateral trade grew, reaching its peak in 1959 at \$103.45 million.³⁶

Although Sino-Soviet relations in the late 1950s were clearly experiencing serious tensions, albeit not yet publicly, China and Poland continued to maintain close ties. While stressing bilateral cooperation, Mao emphasized the need for each socialist country to implement communism according to its national conditions, indicating the PRC's interest in challenging Moscow's hegemony and maintaining a foothold in Eastern Europe.³⁷ This in turn facilitated the

31 Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, pp. 282–295.

32 Ibid., pp. 35–39, 41–42, 46, 125–127, 132–137.

33 Mark Kramer, 'Special Feature: New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crisis', *CWHP Bulletin* Issues 8/9, Spring 1997; Jan Rowiński, ed. *The Polish October 1956 in World Politics* (Warsaw: PISM, 2007).

34 TSC, For Immediate Delivery (PEB) to Jaszczuk (Warsaw), 27 November 1956, z-Depesze, w-51, t-651, AM SZ.

35 TSC, Szymański (PEB) to Minister of Trade Trąmpczyński (MFA), 12 Feb 1958, z-Depesze, w-59, t-830, AM SZ.

36 Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, pp. 282–295.

37 TSC, For Immediate Delivery, Kiryluk (PEB) to Naszkowski (MFA), 2 March 1958, z-Depesze, w-59, t-830; TSC, For Immediate Delivery, Zawadzki (PEB) to Gomułka (MFA) reporting on the conversation between Chairman Mao and Head of State Aleksander Zawadzki in Beijing, 14 October 1959, z-Depesze, w-64, t-934, AM SZ.

maritime cooperation. According to the 1959–1962 agreement, Poland would provide seven ships to China: five of 10,000 DWT and two tankers at 18,000 DWT in exchange for natural resources and foodstuffs. Although Zhou Enlai promised that China would provide agricultural products even at the expense of domestic consumption,³⁸ major adjustments had to be made due to growing economic challenges brought about by the Great Leap Forward.³⁹ However, the cuts in bilateral trade, also influenced by the Sino-Soviet split and the resurgence of Sino-Western European trade, did not mean the end of maritime cooperation between Poland and China.

3 Chipolbrok Amid Ideological Disputes and the Vietnam War

As the multilateral embargo on China disintegrated by the late 1950s,⁴⁰ the Poles (and other Eastern Europeans) faced stiff competition from capitalist nations, including some Western Europeans. The failure of the Great Leap Forward made it urgent for the PRC to obtain necessary goods from the capitalist world. China also became involved in gaining influence in Latin America, Asia and Africa, which took away its focus from Eastern Europe.⁴¹ Most importantly, the Sino-Soviet split deeply affected Beijing's relations with most Soviet bloc nations, including Poland. Chipolbrok, however, carried on its operations due to its economic and political usefulness to both nations.

While in 1960 total trade between China and Eastern Europe diminished, by 1961 the trade cuts were drastic, averaging fifty per cent. In the case of Poland, it decreased from \$89.68 million to \$45.13 million, placing the Poles still third among the Soviet bloc nations (after the GDR and Czechoslovakia), but already eleventh among China's major trading partners.⁴² The Poles interpreted these changes as being more politically motivated than driven by economic troubles.⁴³ Certainly the Sino-Soviet relations, already strained due to the withdrawal of Soviet specialists from China in the summer of 1960, deteriorated further with the break between Albania and the Soviet Union in December 1961.

38 TSC, For Immediate Delivery, Kiryluk (PEB) to Gomułka-Cyrankiewicz (ME), 26 and 30 March 1958, z-Depesze, w-59, t-830, AM SZ.

39 TSC, Szymański (PEB) to Kropczyński (ME), 24 February and 12 & 19 August 1959 and TSC, Mirowski (PEB) to Kropczyński (ME), 13 July 1959, z-Depesze, w-64, t-934, AM SZ.

40 Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, pp. 174–203.

41 Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

42 Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, pp. 282–295.

43 TSC, Eyes Only, Knothe (PEB) to Rapacki and Kliszko (ME), 15 March 1961, Depesze, w-75, t-1154, AM SZ.

This new development contributed to a stepped-up competition between Moscow and Beijing in the Third World. For example, China's trade with Cuba in 1961 reached \$221.41 million, placing the new communist regime in second place after the USSR, but ahead of some Eastern European partners and capitalist nations which resumed trade with China.⁴⁴

At the same time, China was reeling from the effects of the Great Leap Forward, which took its toll on the Chinese economy and claimed millions of lives.⁴⁵ China needed grain and technology from the West and began to rely more on trade with Western Europe, Canada, and Australia. As Zhou Enlai confided with Hungary's ambassador in Beijing, 'Due to natural disasters, the withdrawal of the Soviet specialists, and the fact that the USSR did not fulfil its economic agreements, the PRC has to resort to buying wheat from capitalist nations in exchange for our goods'.⁴⁶ Clearly, the Chinese premier tried to gain sympathy from the Eastern Europeans, and would not admit, at least not yet, the failed policies of the Great Leap Forward.

Given the new realities, the Poles had to find ways to ensure their economic and maritime presence in China following a decade of close party, economic, political, military, and cultural relations with Beijing.⁴⁷ The task was formidable since Warsaw was now officially siding with Moscow in the Sino-Soviet split. Gomułka, communist ideologue that he was, continued to make efforts behind the scenes to reconcile relations between Beijing and Moscow, as he firmly believed that ideological tensions would not only weaken the Socialist camp as a whole, but also make Poland more dependent on Moscow.⁴⁸ At the same time, the fact that he tested the Soviets on their China policy made Gomułka useful

44 Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, pp. 282–295.

45 Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–62* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

46 TSC, Flato (PEB) to Morski (MEA), 1 December 1963, z-Depesze, w-105, t-614, AMSZ.

47 TSC, Deputy Foreign Minister Winiewicz (MEA) to Knothe (PEB), 15 May 1964 and Morski (MEA) to Knothe (PEB), 15 July 1964, z-Depesze, w-122, t-696, AMSZ.

48 Secret, 'Note regarding the development of trade exchange between Poland and the USSR in 1956–1960, as well as fundamental problems of this exchange for 1961–1965, Warsaw, 23 January 1960', in *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego PRL–ZSRR, 1956–1970*, edited by Andrzej Paczkowski (London: Aneks Publishers, 1998), pp. 140–157; 'A Letter from Władysław Gomułka to Nikita Khrushchev regarding the non-proliferation of hydrogen weapons, dated 8 October 1963', *Tajne Dokumenty*, pp. 170–179; 'Record of Former Ambassador to Poland Wang Bingnan's Conversation with Gomułka', 7 April 1964, PRC FMA 109-03905-02, 10–17, accessible at <<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119328>>; 'Record of Conversation between Polish leader Władysław Gomułka and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai', Moscow, 7 November 1964, KC PZPR: XIA/15, Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archives of Modern Records, hereafter AAN].

to Mao's differentiation policy towards Eastern Europe aimed at challenging Moscow's hegemony in the region.⁴⁹

Therefore, to the benefit of the Poles, the PRC continued to maintain reasonable levels of trade and maritime cooperation. Although Poland's bilateral trade with China decreased significantly, the cuts were not as drastic as those experienced by other Soviet bloc nations, most notably the GDR and Czechoslovakia, which were once China's leading trade partners. In 1964, Poland's trade with China was at \$42.05 million, surpassing China's trade with the GDR and Czechoslovakia, which at one point were at \$188.55 million and \$175.95 million respectively.⁵⁰ Poland's maritime ties with China were also going strong. The Chinese merchant fleet was assessed at 70,000 DWT plus another 70,000 in the joint shipping venture with Czechoslovakia. Chipolbrok, on the other hand, constituted 200,000 DWT. In late 1963, the PRC requested the purchase of one tanker (12,000 DWT) and two cargo ships (10,000 DWT each). Although the Poles could not meet the deadline, they explored the possibility for 1965. The Chinese immediately put in a request for cargo vessels at 4,000 DWT in exchange for, among other things, 300 tons of cacao, 5,000 tons of sulphur, 500,000 pieces of goatskins, and 1,400 barrels of pork tripe.⁵¹ In order to further entice the Poles regarding the purchases of a 10,000 DWT cargo ship or a 12,000 DWT tanker, the Chinese made additional offers of 50 tons of tobacco from the Bulgarian re-export and 10,000 tons of pork.⁵²

While the cultivation of the maritime relationship via Chipolbrok was important to China economically, it also proved to be politically useful. The ships travelled under the Polish flag, which facilitated China's trade relations with other nations. This was especially important in the waters near the US.⁵³ Again, Cuba is a case in point. In the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Soviet-Cuban relations were strained, which opened a window for the Chinese to influence the Cubans on the issue of the Sino-Soviet split. One of the ships named *Chopin*, which travelled on the route between China and Canada, carried highly desirable grain for China and goods from Shanghai and Dalian

49 Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, *After Leaning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2011), p. 165.

50 Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 282–295.

51 TSC, Mienczyński (PEB) to Trąpczyński (MFA), 9 July 1964, z-Depesze, w-122, t-696, AMSZ.

52 TSC, Mienczyński (PEB) to Trąpczyński (MFA), 15 October 1964, z-Depesze, w-122, t-696, AMSZ.

53 Secret, Political Report of the Polish Embassy in Beijing, 1 November 1962 to 20 September 1963, z-32/66, w-3, p. 104, AMSZ.

to Cuba.⁵⁴ At one point, both sides agreed that ships would not make stops in Cuba. In the autumn of 1963, however, the Chinese requested that *Chopin* delivered wheat to Cuba as relief in the aftermath of a hurricane. After Beijing's repeated pleas, *Chopin* eventually made such a stop, signalling that Warsaw was willing to tolerate China's politically motivated activities that flew in the face of Moscow.⁵⁵

With the onset of the Vietnam War in mid-1965, it became much harder to ignore China's ideological motivations. The Chipolbrok ships, which also carried supplies for North Vietnam, were subject to controls by US military patrols in waters near Vietnam. Given Mao's increasingly confrontational foreign policy and deeper American military intervention, Chinese crew members put up resistance against any stops. The issue soon became a diplomatic one, especially since the Chinese Chairman of Chipolbrok sided with the crewmembers. Polish officials in Warsaw explained to the Chinese ambassador that 'Naturally, Poland supported the cause of the Vietnamese in their military and political struggle against the Americans', but Chipolbrok ships had to comply if stopped for the safety of the crew.⁵⁶ Beijing disagreed. 'Under no circumstances', the official note stated, 'would the Chinese crew submit itself to demeaning and humiliating controls of the American imperialists'.⁵⁷ The Chinese reminded the Poles that while the ships may have operated under the Polish flag and captain, the entire crew had to be treated equally.

In order to aid the Vietnamese, protect the Polish crew, avoid confrontations with the Chinese, and ensure economic interests, Warsaw proposed the use of the Polish flotilla.⁵⁸ However, under the pressure from the Chinese, who would not kowtow to the US in their own backyard, the ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in Beijing insisted that Chipolbrok ships transport the cargo destined for Vietnam.⁵⁹ The Chinese rejected Warsaw's suggestion to use only Polish sailors on Chipolbrok ships. Instead, they proposed that three ships should operate under the Polish flag with an exclusively Polish crew and

54 TSC, Urgent, Eyes Only, Koral (PEB) to Darski- Trąpczyński, 20 March 1963, z-Depesze, w-105, t-614, AM SZ.

55 TSC, Urgent Knothe (PEB) to Morski-Darski (MFA – circulated to Cyrankiewicz, Kliszko, Rapacki, and Naszkowski), 15 October 1963, z-Depesze, w-105, t-614, AM SZ.

56 TSC, For Immediate Delivery and Eyes Only, Director Maria Wierna (MFA) to Knothe (PEB), 5 June 1965 and TSC, Very Urgent, Morski (MFA) to Knothe (PEB), 10 June 1965, z-Depesze, w-143, t-769, AM SZ.

57 TSC, Eyes Only, Morski (MFA) to Knothe (PEB), 15 June 1965, z-Depesze, w-143, t-769, AM SZ.

58 TSC, Urgent, Knothe (PEB) to Wierna (MFA), 9 June 1965, z-Depesze, w-143, t-769, AM SZ.

59 TSC, Morski (MFA) to Knothe (PEB), 7 July 1965, z-Depesze, w-143, t-769, AM SZ.

the other three under the Chinese flag with an exclusively Chinese crew. The Poles vacillated, but in the end agreed with the Chinese proposal. 'Poland had no intention to control Chipolbrok', Deputy Foreign Minister Naszkowski said, 'On the contrary, Poland was committed to cultivating maritime ties'.⁶⁰ Therefore, Chipolbrok continued to hold its regular meetings at the level of chairmen and deputy maritime ministers, who worked together to ensure mutual interests. One of the major agreements reached between Poland and China was the construction of a cargo ship in exchange for 24,000 tons of meat, and another vessel in the B-41 series (around 10,000 DWT) in exchange for natural resources and 8,600 tons of meat.⁶¹ Clearly, for the sake of the venture and aid to Vietnam, the Poles seemed willing to overlook ideological differences.

4 Chipolbrok – A Window into the Cultural Revolution

The Sino-Polish Joint Shipping Venture experienced trials and tribulations posed by the fluctuating political climate in which it operated. The toughest challenge, however, came during the Cultural Revolution. Chipolbrok withstood the test and continued its operations unlike the Soviet and Eastern European joint ventures, which suspended their operations only to resume them once relations with China were normalized in the 1980s. It is clear that the Polish government deemed Chipolbrok to be economically and politically expedient. This in turn meant that Chinese and Polish consulates and Chipolbrok offices became windows into the Cultural Revolution and opportunities for propaganda.

With the intensification of the Sino-Soviet split, Moscow and other Eastern European capitals (except for Tirana and Bucharest) closed their consulates in China. Warsaw did not follow suit and kept its consulates in Shanghai and Guangzhou and its Chipolbrok offices open.⁶² Interestingly, the consulate in Guangzhou fell under the budget of the Maritime Ministry, signalling that maritime relations were important to Poland. Ironically, it was the Polish ambassador in Beijing, Jerzy Knothe, who lobbied to close the consulates. His advice was not heeded as Director Maria Wierna in the foreign ministry explained that this would be 'politically inexpedient' for Poland.⁶³ The decision

60 TSC, Morski (MFA) to Knothe (PEB), 27 July 1965, z-Depesze, w-143, t-769, AM SZ.

61 TSC, Mienczyński (PEB) to Trąpczyński (MFA), 1 December 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928.

62 TSC, Councillor Stanisław Flato (PEB) to Deputy Foreign Minister Naszkowski (MFA), 22 September 1962, z-Depesze, w-84, t-1278, AM SZ.

63 TSC, Knothe (PEB) to Szewczyk-Morski (MFA), 14 September 1963 and TSC, Wierna (MFA) to Knothe (PEB), 15 October 1963, z-Depesze, w-105, t-614, AM SZ.

reflected Gomulka's attitude towards the Sino-Soviet split and relations with China. The available evidence shows that Moscow did not object to Warsaw's decision; if anything, it seems that it was really between Poland and China. It is possible that the Soviet leadership saw an opportunity in having a closely like Poland maintain a foothold in China in the absence of party relations and limited interactions with Beijing. The bottom line, however, is that the Poles had more access to the gradually isolationist China, giving them an edge over the Soviet and Eastern European counterparts (except for Albanians and Romanians who openly defied Moscow) and providing Poland with a limited agency in its relationship with the PRC.

In the summer of 1966, when Chairman Mao and his trusted group unleashed the Cultural Revolution, the Polish consulates began to report on the turbulence, which was uniform in the type of destruction and mayhem. The Red Guards painted revolutionary slogans on the consulate's building in Guangzhou.⁶⁴ Numerous phrases such as 'we will kick out foreign hooligans' and 'down with revisionism' were written on Chipolbrok's main building in Shanghai, the employee dorms, and the chairman's car.⁶⁵ Upon Warsaw's intervention, the Chinese authorities quickly removed the slogans and did not allow the mobs to harass the staff, indicating that they still had some control over increasingly dangerous events. Although Chinese officials reiterated to the Polish ambassador that China 'cared very much about its relations with Poland', Chipolbrok employees soon became a target, as they had no diplomatic immunity.⁶⁶ In late September 1966, twenty Red Guards barged into the apartment of the Chairman of Chipolbrok and took away the camera from his fifteen-year-old son, who had previously been seen taking photos of teachers being shamed. Interestingly, the Polish ambassador reprimanded the Chipolbrok staff for unnecessarily provoking Chinese radical youth.⁶⁷

Once the Cultural Revolution engulfed China, even Chipolbrok sailors were not spared the direct exposure to Mao's *Little Red Book* and other means of propaganda. In the summer of 1967, the Red Guards immediately boarded a ship which had just arrived in Shanghai. The Polish sailors were asked to pre-emptively hand over their papers one by one and had their possessions searched. They were then

64 TSC, Stachowiak (PEB) to Meller (MFA) – circulated to Kliszko, Rapacki, and Czesak, 1 September 1966, z-Depesze, w-170, t-849, AMSZ.

65 TSC, Stachowiak (PEB) to Wierna (MFA), 28 and 31 August (Meller, Urgent) 1966, z-Depesze, w-170, t-848, AMSZ.

66 TSC, Urgent, Stachowiak (PEB) to Meller (MFA) – circulated to Gomulka, Cyrankiewicz, Gierek, Kliszko, Rapacki, etc., 1 September 1966, z-Depesze, w-170, t-849, AMSZ.

67 TSC, Urgent, Stachowiak (PEB) to Meller (MFA) 28 September 1966, z-Depesze, w-170, t-849, AMSZ.

subjected to listening to loud recitations of Mao's quotes, as well as anti-Soviet and anti-British slogans, for over two hours. On top of that, Chipolbrok employees were now required to carry passes to meet the arriving ships. This policy thwarted the workflow because obtaining such passes took time.⁶⁸

Even during the most heated days of the Cultural Revolution, Poland's Foreign and Maritime Ministries were cautious about overly criticizing Chinese actions. If anything, they downplayed the already high tensions between Chipolbrok staff and the Red Guards. 'We are approaching the matter of Chipolbrok very carefully and we are trying not to get involved in the domestic situation', Director Wierna wrote to the Polish embassy in Beijing. 'Chipolbrok is very important to us economically. Surely, we are not giving up on protesting when circumstances call for such an action. However, we need to remain calm and we do not want to provoke and be provoked by creating situations that can cause unnecessary conflict'. The Polish consul in Shanghai was therefore instructed to act accordingly: 'You need to treat the matter of Chipolbrok with care. Immediately consult with us and the Maritime Ministry before you officially proceed with filing any complaints and taking it up with Chinese officials'.⁶⁹ The position of the ministries was in line with the Polish party, which did not want to incite conflict with China.⁷⁰

The Polish government did not want to threaten its maritime relations with the Chinese even amid the ensuing chaos in the port cities. The assessments of the situation in Tianjin, Shanghai, and Guangzhou prepared by Ambassador Witold Rodziński, who, remarkably, was able to travel around China primarily thanks to the continued presence of Chipolbrok, pointed to the opportunity for political analysis and for closer maritime cooperation, as well as highlighting the special importance of Shanghai to Poland's economic and political interests.⁷¹ The frequent reports confirmed that the city was in great turmoil and its near paralysis also affected the work of Chipolbrok. The authorities must have come to their senses, because they finally tended to one of the ships that had been waiting at the docks for eight days. Clearly, the Chinese simply

68 TSC, Kwiatkowski (PEB) to Meller-Wendrowski (MFA), 9 July 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AMSZ.

69 TSC, Wierna (MFA) to Kwiatkowski (PEB), 14 July 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AMSZ.

70 'Informational Material prepared by the Head of the International Department for Comrade Zenon Kliszko, Secretary of the CC P UWP', 13 July 1967, pp. 1–2, KC PZPR: XIA/23, AAN (the document was circulated to the Politburo members).

71 TSC, Urgent Rodziński (PEB) to Szewczyk (MFA), 5 December 1966 and TSC, Eyes Only, Rodziński (PEB) to Wierna (MFA), 5 December 1966, z-Depesze, w-170, t-849, AMSZ.

could not ignore the practical aspects of their economy even amid the country's revolutionary fervour.⁷²

Thanks to the Sino-Polish maritime connection strengthened by Chipolbrok, the leadership in Warsaw kept up with the excesses of the Cultural Revolution that swept the nation in 1967.⁷³ Shanghai experienced much violence carried out by mass organizations against foreign nationals, especially the British. The streets were constantly patrolled by the army, which was trying to calm the chaos.⁷⁴ The reports and telephone conversations with the Polish consular staff described the situation in Guangzhou and Shanghai as 'incredibly violent'. PIA's attempts to quell the mobs of bored youth wreaking havoc among the exhausted population, and frequent death scenes, including bodies hanging from street lamps, became a daily reality in both cities.⁷⁵ Thanks to Chipolbrok, the Polish ambassador obtained a pass to visit Tianjin, which was closed to diplomats at the time. The city was teeming with high tensions. When cable communication was lost due to extreme chaos, Chipolbrok staff prepared written letters dispatched to Beijing, detailing the anarchy, signs of civil war, famine, and ships waiting at the docks for six weeks on average.⁷⁶

Much of the turbulence had subsided in Shanghai by late September 1967, but the tension was still palpable in Guangzhou and Tianjin. There were frequent outbursts of violence in schools and factories, people were armed with weapons, and the bands of Red Guards grasped for power. Food shortages and rations affected Tianjin especially.⁷⁷ Overall, these assessments contained harrowing details, which were not reported in the press or the media.⁷⁸ The Polish leadership at its highest levels was receiving information on a near-daily basis on the incredible chaos that unfolded and eventually subsided in China.

72 TSC, Rodziński (PEB) to Flato (MFA), 20 January 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AMSZ.

73 The Polish embassy staff was met with violence and invectives such as 'Polish slaves of the Russian revisionists', 'Polish lackeys', 'Polish dogs', and 'Polish pigs', while helping evacuate Russian families. TSC, Urgent, Rodziński (PEB) to Foreign Minister Rapacki (MFA), 6 February 1967 and TSC, Eyes Only Exclusively, Urgent, Rodziński (PEB) to Foreign Minister Rapacki and Kliszko (MFA), 14 February 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AMSZ.

74 TSC, Rodziński (PEB) to Meller (MFA), 31 May 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AMSZ.

75 TSC, Urgent, Kwiatkowski (PEB) to Meller (MFA) to 10, 11, 18, and 19 August 1967 (circulated to Gomułka, Cyrankiewicz, Gierek, Kliszko, Rapacki, etc.), z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AMSZ.

76 TSC, Urgent, Kwiatkowski (PEB) to Meller (MFA), 7 September 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AMSZ.

77 Confidential, 'Informational Note prepared by PAP correspondent B. Moszkiewicz from his visit to Tianjin', 17 November 1967, KC PZPR: XIA/23, AAN; TSC, Rowiński (PEB) to Meller (MFA), 15 December 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AMSZ.

78 Secret, 'Note regarding the political situation in Guangdong, 1 July 1968 – 15 August 1968', pp. 1–8 and Secret, 'Note regarding the continuation of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai', 7 August 1968, pp. 1–3, Departmental Files, China 1968, z-16/73, w-1, AMSZ.

Gomułka certainly had no access to what was going on politically behind the scenes, and so much of the information he had on the changes in the PRC leadership came from the press. However, the consular reports no doubt gave him a better sense of the events on the ground and a slight edge in his discussions with the Soviets on China.⁷⁹

While Chipolbrok offices and Polish consulates in China became a window into the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese consulate in Gdańsk and Chipolbrok offices in Gdynia were heavily utilized to spread propaganda material. In the early stages of the Sino-Soviet split, the Chinese disseminated their propaganda quite overtly, as Gomułka seemed to tolerate such activities. With the deepening of the split, however, the surveillance of Chinese citizens in Poland and especially the embassy in Warsaw increased. The PRC government resorted to sending propaganda materials by mail straight from China, and even from Great Britain, to Poland. The Chinese frequently targeted Polish sailors who had returned home and utilized people in Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Sopot who either knew or were interested in learning Esperanto. The consulate conveniently offered language classes and distributed seemingly innocuous magazines about China in Esperanto accompanied by ideological content on the Sino-Soviet split and the Vietnam War.⁸⁰

With the onset of the Cultural Revolution in the summer of 1966, the Chinese substantially increased their propaganda. While the embassy in Warsaw was at the forefront of coordinating activities, the consulate and Chipolbrok offices grew in importance.⁸¹ The Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs reports indicate that there were about three hundred and ten active Chinese employees at diplomatic posts in Poland in the latter half of the 1960s, out of which, on average, seven worked for the Consulate in Gdańsk and six for the Chipolbrok Office in Gdynia. In addition, Chinese students and apprentices were used to agitate Polish workers in places such as the Electro-Technical Maritime Plant in Gdańsk. Based on the analysis conducted by the security apparatus and secret police, on the whole Polish citizens were indifferent to Chinese propaganda

79 'Minutes of Soviet-Polish talks in Moscow', 10–15 October 1966, in Paczkowski, *Tajne Dokumenty*, 410–417; 426 and KC PZPR: XI/83, AAN; 'Minutes of Soviet-Polish talks in Moscow', 3–4 March 1969, in Paczkowski, *Tajne Dokumenty*, pp. 557–560.

80 Secret 'Informational Note No. 111 regarding dissemination of Chinese and Albanian propaganda materials, as well as brochures of foreign origins, prepared by Department III of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW)' 25 June 1965, 0296/61 t.1, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej [National Institute of Remembrance, Warsaw, hereafter IPN].

81 Polish communists such as Kazimierz Mijal, who later defected to Albania, also spread Maoist views. For more details, see Margaret K. Gnoinska, 'Promoting the "China Way" of Communism in Poland and Beyond during the Sino-Soviet Split: The Case of Kazimierz Mijal', *Cold War History* 18, no. 3 (2018): pp. 343–359.

except for some who were intrigued by discussions with Chinese diplomats, correspondents, and students.⁸² Others, however, targeted Chipolbrok's housing facilities by posting anti-Maoist signs and slogans.⁸³

As the Cultural Revolution intensified, the consulate in Gdańsk and Chipolbrok staff in Gdynia organized movie screenings of films like *The East Is Red* followed by political and ideological debates on topics such as the Sino-Soviet split, the Vietnam War, the teachings of Chairman Mao, Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, and the threats to Marxism-Leninism posed by American imperialism and Soviet revisionism.⁸⁴ This aggressive rhetoric emboldened the Chinese Consul General, who demanded the status of chargé d'affaires. The foreign ministry in Warsaw initially denied the request, but eventually granted it, indicating that the Polish authorities worked to minimize the tensions in their relations with China amid the Cultural Revolution.⁸⁵

The Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs estimated that between 1965 and 1967 the number of mail packages from China to Poland, which included propaganda materials, increased fivefold from 4,500 to 22,800.⁸⁶ As the most violent stages of the Cultural Revolution were winding down, by early 1969 the consulate in Gdańsk and Chipolbrok offices in Gdynia reduced their activities related to the dissemination of propaganda literature and other efforts to engage Polish citizens in political and ideological debates.

5 Conclusion

The Sino-Polish Joint Shipping Venture, founded in 1951 and dubbed Chipolbrok, withstood the test of time during the Sino-Soviet divergences and the violent stages of the Cultural Revolution. The venture served as a constant in the Sino-Polish relationship throughout the 1950s when such relations were close and later when these relations hit rock bottom. This chapter has argued that despite their ideological differences, both China and Poland decided to continue their maritime relations through Chipolbrok for economic and

82 Secret, 'Information regarding the propaganda activities of the embassies of the People's Republic of China and Albania in Poland', 16 December 1966, 0296/61 t.1, IPN.

83 TSC, MFA to Rodziński (PEB), 13 February 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AM SZ.

84 Secret, 'Information regarding attempt to utilize some cells of the Polish-Chinese Friendship Society (TPPCh) to carry out activities that went against our party line', 14 March 1967, 0296/61 t.1, IPN.

85 TSC, Meller (MFA) to Kwiatkowski (PEB) to, 8 August 1967, z-6/77, w-192, t-928, AM SZ.

86 Secret, 'Information regarding Chinese and Albanian propaganda literature as well as the activities of the Albanian and Chinese embassies between 01.01.-20.09.1967', November 1967, 0296/61 t.1, IPN.

political reasons. When Beijing and Moscow parted ways, Warsaw did not close its consulates in China even though the Soviet Union and other Eastern European nations (except for Albania and Romania) were closing theirs. Moreover, the Poles continued to maintain maritime relations through Chipolbrok when other Soviet bloc members were suspending their joint ventures with China. These decisions reflected the Gomułka government's policy, which carefully navigated its tenuous relationship with China while openly siding with Moscow. The continuous presence of the consulates and Chipolbrok offices created an unparalleled opportunity for Polish diplomats to witness first-hand the excesses of the Cultural Revolution not only in Beijing, but in other parts of China, most notably Tianjin, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. These first-hand accounts no doubt provided the Polish leadership with a more complex picture of China. In turn, this knowledge allowed for even-tempered interactions with the Chinese. For their part, the Chinese used the Chipolbrok Office in Gdynia and the consulate in Gdańsk as a foothold in Eastern Europe and vehicles for propaganda of Maoist thought during the intense periods of the Sino-Soviet split and the Cultural Revolution.

The available sources indicate that Chipolbrok was as independent a venture as the current political conditions would allow. With the exception of the Soviet interference in the creation of Chipolbrok and its activities in the early 1950s during the Korean War, there is no evidence to suggest that Moscow controlled the Polish side of the venture. The available evidence suggests that while in the 1950s it was the Chinese who deemed the venture to be very important for circumventing the US embargo, in the 1960s, it was the Poles who seemed to care most about the continuation of the venture for economic and political reasons. In all, this chapter is a case study of a still largely ignored institution of the Cold War which served as a constant in the relationship between China and Poland, marred by ebbs and flows brought about by the Sino-Soviet split. While the chapter focused on the 1950s and the 1960s, Chipolbrok withstood the end of the Cold War and continues to operate today.⁸⁷

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Learning from the Chinese People's Liberation Army: the Mass Line in the German Democratic Republic's National People's Army

Chen Tao*

'The second pillar of the socialist camp!'¹ This was how East German diplomats described the China of the 1950s. The Cold War years between 1949 and 1959 witnessed a honeymoon period in relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In these years, the two socialist brother-countries enjoyed extensive contacts in the field of trade, as well as in technological, political, and diplomatic affairs. During this period, the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) introduced certain Chinese political practices to East Germany. One key experience was the Mass Line of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), an internal rectification campaign to bring the party cadres closer to the masses. In the military field, this campaign involved military officers serving in the ranks as soldiers or participating directly as workers in industrial production.²

The introduction of Chinese experiences into the East German armed forces has so far been studied from a predominantly German perspective. Due to national security concerns and the rule of the SED regime, military affairs became highly secretive, an 'X field' in East German society.³ Little was thus known about the Sino-East German military cooperation until the declassification of GDR documents following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Since 1990, there have been a number of studies on the Chinese influence on East Germany's National People's Army (Nationale Volksarmee, NVA) in the late 1950s. Based

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1 Siegfried Bock, 'Der Freundschaftsvertrag von 1955', in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Beziehungen der DDR und der VR China*, edited by Joachim Krüger (Münster: IT Verlag, 2002), p. 35.

2 Chen Tao 陈弢, 'Qunzhong luxian zai deguo yanjiu zhiyi' 群众路线在德国研究之 [A study of the Mass Line in the GDR], *Lengzhan guojishi yanjiu* 冷战国际史研究 1 (2016): pp. 159–195.

3 Rüdiger Wenzke, 'Zur Herausbildung und Entwicklung eines sozialistischen Offizierskorps im DDR Militär', in *Eliten im Sozialismus: Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, edited by Peter Hübner (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), p. 170.

on German archival sources, these studies examine the origin, development, and end of the adoption of Chinese practices in the NVA. While they adopt a top-down rather than a bottom-up approach,⁴ these works argue that most NVA officers accepted the Mass Line movement without resistance. Stephan Fingerle has observed, for instance, that the NVA officer corps was 'reliable and voiced no criticism towards the SED's orders'.⁵ Meanwhile, all these studies suffer from an absence of Chinese sources, such as governmental records and memoirs of Chinese generals. Therefore, they cannot provide the Chinese perspective, which is essential to understand this cooperation between two major socialist countries. In the past few years, the history of the socialist bloc has been the subject of many scholarly publications, but even the most recent studies of the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s pay little attention to how and what East Europeans learned from the Chinese.⁶ Moreover, the studies on the rivalry between the two superpowers of the socialist bloc ignore the reactions of the East European domestic societies to the Sino-Soviet split.⁷ Consequently, Sino-East European relations and, especially, China's influence in the Soviet bloc need to be further investigated.

Drawing on the accessible bilateral sources from both German and Chinese archives, this chapter presents and analyses the implementation and functioning of the Mass Line in the NVA, as well as the CCP's attitude towards the introduction of its practices in East Germany, thereby giving particular consideration to the reactions of different elements of the NVA officer corps. In doing so, this chapter argues that the SED's introduction of the Mass Line into the NVA, as well as its final repeal, was mainly decided by domestic factors, rather than foreign ones such as the Sino-Soviet split. It was in the wake of the search for an alternative method of governing following the twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) that the SED introduced the

4 Klaus Storkmann, *Das Chinesische Prinzip in der NVA: Vom Umgang der SED mit den Generalen und Offizieren in der frühen NVA* (Berlin: Köster, 2001); Klaus Storkmann, 'Von China lernen?: Der Einsatz von Offizieren als Mannschafftsoldaten in der NVA 1959/60', *Militärgeschichte* 3 (2010): pp. 12–15; Rüdiger Wenzke, *Ulbrichts Soldaten. Die Nationale Volksarmee, 1956 bis 1971* (Berlin: Ch Links, 2013); Stephan Fingerle, *Waffen in Arbeiterhand? Die Rekrutierung des Offizierkorps der NVA und ihrer Vorläufer* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2001).

5 Fingerle, *Waffen in Arbeiterhand*, p. 182.

6 Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Thomas Bernstein and Huayu Li, *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949–Present* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2011).

7 Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962–1967* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

CCP's Mass Line to the GDR and its armed forces, the NVA. Yet the complaints and grievances from NVA officers, the increasing financial burden, together with the developing ideological debates inside the socialist bloc, forced the SED to repeal the Mass Line programme in the NVA in the early 1960s.

1 Introduction of the Mass Line

As a result of the SED's search for an alternative to the Soviet model after 1956, the Mass Line was introduced to the GDR. In China, the Mass Line first appeared in the early 1920s as a basic principle governing how the party was organised and run. It was then developed further by Mao Zedong during the Yan'an era (1935–1948). Yan'an, a little town in China's poor Shanxi province, was known to the world as a laboratory of the CCP, where Mao developed the basis for his interpretation of the socialist ideology. The Mass Line was supposed to address two problematic tendencies of dictatorships: losing touch with popular sentiment and the resulting political apathy among the people, who would come to believe that they could not influence their own leaders. Mao believed that it was with this strategy that he could mobilise the Chinese people to overcome the obstacles that kept the country poor and weak.⁸ In the ideological dictionary of the CCP, the Mass Line comprised of measures such as the strengthening of the cadre's socialist consciousness, the linking of theory and practice, the contact of cadres with the grassroots level of society, as well as criticism and self-criticism within the party. After the founding of the PRC in 1949, the Mass Line remained at the very basis of the CCP's ideology and was deployed by Mao to consolidate his rule.⁹ The SED gradually gained an interest in this policy, and this development coincided with changes in both domestic and international affairs.

The Mass Line's influence outside of China owed a great deal to the political developments in the socialist bloc. The twentieth Congress of the CPSU had a profound impact on the international socialist camp. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and his new theory on East-West relations, the principle of peaceful coexistence, caused chaos inside the bloc. In 1956, for instance, there was a large-scale protest in Poland, followed by an uprising in Hungary. This wave of unrest also reached the GDR. The reformers within the SED called for democracy, fought against the personality cult within the party, and sought

⁸ Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China, From Revolution Through Reform* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), pp. 64–65.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

to improve the workings of the party.¹⁰ Some believed that the SED should no longer depend on the Soviet Union.¹¹

In the shadow of the CPSU's twentieth Congress and the calls for reforms within the SED, Walter Ulbricht, the first secretary of the SED, looked for a way to deal with the troubles facing the GDR. For him, the maintenance of stability in the GDR and the party's control of the country were always the highest priorities. Ulbricht arrested Professor Wolfgang Harich, one of the most critical intraparty intellectuals, as well as other leading reformers, but at the same time he continued Harich's search for a preferable alternative to the Soviet model. Thereby, Ulbricht became aware of China's ideological experiences and the resulting practices.

Similar to the debates in East Germany, the CCP's attitude towards the de-Stalinization process and its effects after the twentieth Congress was rather ambivalent. On the one hand, the CCP was delighted by the criticism of Joseph Stalin, mainly because of what it considered to be his numerous and repetitive insults towards Chinese leaders, such as his support of Wang Ming, who had been Mao's main rival in the party in the 1920s and 1930s, his labelling of Mao as a Chinese Tito, and his negative attitude towards the CCP's decision to launch a civil war against the Guomindang government in the late 1940s. For Mao, Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin before the world communists was a relief. As he put it, 'the CPSU has taken the lid off Stalin (揭了盖子 *jie le gaizi*) by criticizing him'. On the other hand, Mao was wary of domestic instability and fearful of losing power, therefore he refused to repudiate Stalin completely. According to Mao, the twentieth Congress had 'made a blunder (捅了篓子 *tong le louzi*)', and 'someone had made a serious mistake by stating that Stalin was totally wrong'.¹² The Chinese Communist leader was afraid that the Soviet denunciation of Stalin's personality cult would jeopardise his own leadership in China.¹³

¹⁰ Jan Foizik, 'Die parteiinterne Behandlung der Geheimrede Chruschtschows auf dem XX. Parteitag der KPdSU durch die SED, die PVAP und die KPTsch', in *Tauwetter ohne Frühling: Das Jahr 1956 im Spiegel blockinterner Wandlungen und internationaler Krisen*, edited by Inge Kircheisen (Berlin: GSP, 1995), pp. 75–81.

¹¹ Andreas Malycha, 'Chancen und Scheitern von Reformansätzen in der Staatspartei', in *Die Geschichte der SED. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Jens Gieseke and Hermann Wenker (Berlin: Metropol, 2011), pp. 143–144; Rüdiger Beetz, 'Die Rebellion der Intellektuellen in der DDR 1956/58', in Kircheisen, *Tauwetter ohne Frühling*, pp. 126–141.

¹² Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中共中央文献研究室, ed., *Maozedong wenji* 毛泽东文集 [Selected Works of Mao Zedong], Vol. 7 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999), p. 20.

¹³ Shen Zhihua 沈志华, 'Bada buti Maozedongsixiang de Sulian Beijing' 八大不提毛泽东思想的苏联背景 [The Soviet reasons why the eighth congress of the CCP did not mention the Mao Zedong thought], *Yanhuangchunqiu* 炎黄春秋 4 (2013): pp. 45–50.

This contradiction could also be found in the eighth Congress of the CCP held in September 1956. During the Congress, Chinese leaders stressed the importance of democratic centralism, which was an old Leninist concept that was supposed to regulate the decision-making process and the disciplinary policy within the party, and a core principle of the Mass Line.¹⁴ This attracted the attention of many foreign communist party delegates. At the same time, they believed that the reason for developing democratic centralism was to better centralize power. As Mao said, 'both the world revolution and the revolution in China would still need the personality cult',¹⁵ which meant his personal control over the party should still be continued.

In the eyes of many high-ranking SED members, the CCP's eighth Congress was one of the most influential international events for the GDR in the 1950s.¹⁶ As one of the foreign party leaders participating in the Congress, Ulbricht met with Mao. In a conversation with the Chinese leader, he observed that 'we have taken a different road from the Soviet Union since 1949'. 'We have learned a lot from the congress, which offers plenty of advice for our work. We have a strong interest in the Chinese debates of economic problems, as well as the political ideological problems'.¹⁷ In November, the propaganda department of the central committee of the SED went further in pointing out that 'the CCP has attached great importance to the improvement of the working style of the party, which is very much worth studying'.¹⁸

In the Socialist camp, the atmosphere was at the time very favourable for learning from Chinese experiences.¹⁹ The Moscow Conference of World Communist Parties held in November 1957 helped to form a dual leadership system in the socialist bloc. During the conference, the CCP enjoyed an equal position

14 The 'democratic centralism', which Lenin had utilized so effectively in seizing and consolidating power in the Soviet Union, was first introduced to China by the Guomindang in the mid-1920s, and then developed by the CCP. What was called 'democratic' meant consultation among all people concerned, and did not imply any vote. Once a decision was reached, people needed to implement it regardless of whether or not they agreed with it.

15 Shen Zhihua, 'Bada buti Maozedongsixiang de Sulian Beijing', p. 49.

16 Hermann Axen, *Ich war ein Diener der Partei. Autobiographische Gespräche mit Harald Neubert* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1996), p. 211.

17 Aufzeichnung über eine Unterredung zwischen den Genossen Mao Tse-tung mit der Delegation des ZK der SED, Nachlaß Walter Ulbricht, NY 182/1220, Stiftungsarchiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (hereafter cited as SAPMO-BArch).

18 Einige Fragen des Aufbaus des Sozialismus in der VRG und einige Lehren des VIII. Parteitag der KP C, November 1956, DY 30 IV 2/9.03/37, SAPMO-BArch.

19 For the most recent debate on the Chinese model in East European countries, see Jan Zofka: 'China as a role model? The "Economic Leap" campaign in Bulgaria (1958–1960)', *Cold War History* 18, no. 3 (2018): pp. 325–342.

with the CPSU: the idea of convening a conference and issuing a joint declaration was proposed by both parties.²⁰ In the final resolution of the conference, the promotion of 'ideological education in the society' was emphasized.²¹ For the East European communist brother-parties, which were looking for an alternative model to deal with the crisis facing their rule, the emphasis on ideology, along with other Chinese policies, were very attractive.²²

In Mao's opinion, although China was still an economically weak country and lagged behind in some fields, it could, in others, offer its experiences as a model to other socialist brother-countries.²³ The CCP believed that its political and ideological experiences were needed by the rest of the socialist camp, because the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist countries had fallen behind in these fields.²⁴

Following the Moscow conference, the SED also held a congress to lay down basic guiding principles for the future of the party. At the SED's fifth Congress held from 10 to 16 July 1958, which was the most important for the SED in the late 1950s, Ulbricht launched the Seven-Year Plan for the national economy to the delegates. This plan was supposed to be translated into reality through the Mass Line, which had already been collated and translated for SED officials after 1956, the year Ulbricht had visited China in person and discovered the CCP's ideological experience as a potential alternative to the Soviet model. According to the resolution of the fifth Congress, all SED members were ordered to 'eliminate the soulless bureaucracy and the inflexible administrative system. The party and state organs of the GDR should build closer ties with the masses and daily practice.'²⁵

In his speech, Ulbricht made it clear that 'since the end of the twentieth Congress of the CPSU, we have made progress in our policy making, and we are more capable of explaining to the working class and the masses the current problems that we are facing and the ways to solve these problems. Comrade

20 Shen Zhihua 沈志华, *Lengzhan yu zhongguo tongmeng de mingyun (1945-1959)* 冷战与中苏同盟的命运 [The Cold War and the fate of the Sino-Soviet alliance (1945-1959)] (Beijing: Sheke wenxian chubanshe, 2013), p. 497.

21 Hermann Weber, *Geschichte der DDR* (München: dtv, 1999), p. 209; Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance*, p. 128.

22 Besides the SED, the Bulgarian communist party implemented the most profound ideological experiment in the Eastern bloc by launching numerous People's Communes in Bulgaria.

23 Shen Zhihua and Xia Yafeng, 'Hidden Currents during the Honeymoon: Mao, Khrushchev, and the 1957 Moscow Conference', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 4 (2009): pp. 74-117.

24 Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance*, pp. 127-131.

25 Bericht von Gen. Hüttenrauch, 15.1.1959, DL 2/5190, SAPM O-BArch; Rede und Referat Ulbrichts auf dem v. Parteitag der SED, DY 30/IV 1/V/9, SAPM O-BArch.

Mao Zedong and the other Chinese comrades have enlightened us in this field. In our struggles with the enemies, the socialist education of the masses would play a decisive role'.²⁶ Ulbricht's words were clearly inspired by the CCP practice of stressing socialist education of the masses in the attempt to enact the leading principles of the Mass Line. After the founding of the PRC, this had become the party's main way to boost the socialist consciousness among ordinary Chinese people in order to make them obedient to the party's lines and policies. In the eyes of the East German leader, the CCP's Mass Line policies were useful for the elimination of the growing conflicts between the party and the ordinary people. He pointed out that the lack of the Mass Line among the leading cadres had 'caused a misunderstanding of our policies among the ordinary people. We should denounce these wrong attitudes'.²⁷ With the improvement of relations between the party and the masses, Ulbricht believed, the enthusiasm of the East German people would be harnessed, and this would prove highly beneficial for the construction of socialism in the GDR.²⁸

This ideological declaration was the core of the spirit of the SED's fifth Congress and embodied some of the efforts that had already been made by the SED in order to learn from China. In the military field, the most obvious of these efforts was the 'Stoph Delegation' to China in 1957.

2 The Stoph Delegation

Now that the CCP was already considered a model party, rich in political ideological experiences, the SED decided to learn from it in a number of fields. In the military field, a delegation led by Willy Stoph, the Minister of Defence of the GDR, visited China in 1957, marking the beginning of these efforts. While the Chinese perceived the East Germans as newcomers in the political work of the armed forces, the members of the Stoph delegation believed that they had learned a lot from this visit. In the eyes of the ruling SED elites, the relationship between the NVA and the ordinary people, as well as within the armed forces, had been problematic for a long time. According to Stoph, 'the ties between

26 Deguo wenti baogao daibiaotuan jiedaijihua 德国问题报告代表团接待计划 [Reception plan of the delegation on German problems], December 1958, A22-2-698, Shanghai Municipal Archives.

27 Shijie zhishi chubanshe 世界知识出版社, ed., *Deguo tongyi shehuidang diwuci daibiao dahui wenjian* 德国统一社会党第五次代表大会文件 [Documents of the fifth Congress of the SED] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1959), pp. 65–66.

28 Ibid., pp. 135–136.

high-ranking military officers and the working class are growing weak. These people have not worked for years'.²⁹

In order to address this problem, Chinese practices emerged as an alternative for the SED leadership. Unlike in most East European socialist armies, and despite the fact that the PLA had learned much from the Red Army since 1949, the 'one-man leadership system' was never fully established. According to this core principle of the Soviet armed forces, the military commander rather than the political commissar enjoyed unchallenged leadership within his own unit. This system placed more importance on the military skills rather than the political ideological work, and the lower-level subordinates could not criticise the higher-ranking officers. The Chinese stood out for their independent approach. After finding that there were severe problems caused from adopting the Soviet one-man leadership approach, the PLA announced new regulations in November 1957, which required the members of the leading cadres and officers to participate in the Mass Line in the armed forces and listen to criticism and opinions expressed by the masses.³⁰ Marshal Peng Dehuai explained the Chinese military democracy to Soviet military advisors: 'the lower level officers can criticise the higher level, and soldiers are able to criticise the officers'.³¹

For Ulbricht, these Chinese policies offered a way of eliminating the problems within the NVA. During the Politburo meeting on 16 April 1957, he decided to send a delegation to China, 'to learn from the experiences of our Chinese comrades'.³² Then, from 4 September to 3 October 1957, an East German military delegation led by Stoph spent nearly one month in China, the first such mission undertaken by the NVA since its establishment.³³ Upon arrival, Stoph emphasized that the SED was planning 'to learn the rich experiences of the PLA, including the PLA's political work, its military command, mass mobilization, and how it fought with backward weapons against strong enemies'.³⁴ To stress

29 Fingerle, *Waffen in Arbeiterhand*, p. 183.

30 Ibid., p. 211.

31 Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui 沈志华和李丹慧, *Yijiuwuling ninadai zhongsu junshi guanxi jianzheng* 1950年代中苏军事关系见证 [Witnessing the Sino-Soviet military relations of the 1950s] (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2009), pp. 203–204.

32 Protokoll Nr. 17/57 der SED Politbürositzung vom 16.4.1957, DY 30 J IV 2/2/537, SAPMO-Barch.

33 The second NVA delegation of such a high level was in 1962 when they visited the Soviet Union.

34 Deyizhi minzhugongheguo junshidaibiaotuan qingkuangtongbao 德意志民主共和国军事代表团情况通报 [Circular on the situation of the GDR military delegation], 4 September 1957, 109-01102-03(1), Foreign Ministry Archives of China (hereafter cited as FMAC).

China's role in the world and the context of this visit, he also mentioned that the socialist bloc was now led by both the Soviet Union and China.³⁵

Stoph met and talked with Mao Zedong on 2 October. Confident in the PIA's political and ideological work, Mao stressed to Stoph that 'in the socialist camp, the military strategist should also be a qualified politician. And the armed forces should serve as an instrument for the class struggle'. According to the Chinese record of the meeting, Stoph saw eye to eye with Mao and acknowledged the necessity of learning from the PIA. The East German Defence Minister said that 'the suggestions of the Chairman are useful for our work in Germany. Although we are a developed industrial country, in the field of politics we are lagging behind. We have found that the working people have strong confidence in the party and government everywhere in China'.³⁶

As the PIA's political work was so different from that of the NVA and the other East European armies/armed forces, the members of the Stoph delegation were very interested in what they saw during their visit to China. When visiting the 190th Division of the PIA stationed in Peking, for instance, the NVA generals raised questions such as 'What roles can the political department play in the armed forces? Is it entitled to deny the orders of the commanders? Would the soldiers be placed in confinement?'.³⁷ Using confinement as a method to punish the soldiers first appeared in the 'Disciplinary Regulations of the PIA' in January 1951. In August 1957, under the suggestion of Marshal Peng Dehuai, the disciplinary regulations in which the confinement was included were finally repealed.³⁸ This was totally new to their East German comrades.

In the eyes of Stoph, the reasons for the outstanding performances of the PIA soldiers lay in 'the good discipline and training resulting from an embedded socialist consciousness among the soldiers'. He noted that 'the relations between the officers and rank-and-file soldiers here are very good. Thus, the orders from the officers are all taken seriously'.³⁹ All these experiences helped to strengthen the belief among the delegates that both military skills and political work were indispensable to the armed forces, and that 'China is able to

35 In the eyes of the Chinese officers, the leading comrades of the GDR had never made such a pro-China speech in public. See *Ibid.*

36 Maozedong zhuxi huijian minzhudeguo junshidaibiaotuan tanhua jilu 毛泽东主席会见民主德国军事代表团谈话记录 [Minutes of a conversation between Mao Zedong and the GDR military delegation], 2 October 1957, 109-01102-4(1), FMAC.

37 Deyizhi minzhugongheguo junshidaibiaotuan qingkuangtongbao 德意志民主共和国军事代表团情况通报 [Circular on the situation of the GDR military delegation], 7 September 1957, 109-01102-03(1), FMAC.

38 Shen Zihua and Li Danhui, *Yijiuwuling niandai zhongguo junshi guanxi jianzheng*, pp. 206–210.

39 Deyizhi minzhugongheguo junshidaibiaotuan qingkuangtongbao 德意志民主共和国军事代表团情况通报 [Circular on the situation of the GDR military delegation], 7 September 1957, 109-01102-03(1), FMAC.

help us with its combat experiences, while the GDR could assist China in the field of technology'.⁴⁰

From the perspective of the Chinese, however, the East Germans were not only both naive and underdeveloped in the field of political work, but were also lacking in military skills. The local army officials who received the Stoph delegation believed that 'although most of the delegates have studied in the Soviet Union for a long time, their military skills are at a very low level. And they are short of the practical experiences of commanding large troop formations'.⁴¹ According to the Chinese accounts, 'some of the delegates pointed at one of our flame throwers and did not know what it was'.⁴²

Before the visit, the PLA had studied the development of the NVA and perceived it as promising, but the leadership of the Chinese armed forces believed that 'there are still a lot of problems'.⁴³ The Soviet military experiences, for example, were deemed by them as negative and unhelpful: '[the NVA] imitated the Soviet military experiences. All the teaching materials are copies of the Soviet comrades. And when faced with the experiences of the other socialist brother countries, they are not always so open-minded'.⁴⁴ They also criticised the 'socialist consciousness' of the NVA: 'they lack the confidence to fight against the enemies. They are not willing to shoot their West German brothers. And they place too much importance on military techniques'.⁴⁵ The high-ranking officers of the PLA, who met and talked with the delegation, suggested that both the SED and the East German government should take harsher measures against their enemies, both at home and abroad: 'the prerequisite for high-speed socialist construction lies in the elimination of its enemies'.⁴⁶

No direct mention of inner-NVA relations is made in the available Chinese sources, but it can be inferred from the German documents that Chinese demonstrations of their own ideological political work led the East Germans to believe that they had learned much from this visit. In the records of the Ministry of Defence of the NVA, Stoph's visit to China was described as 'no doubt a successful one'.⁴⁷ The delegates were greatly impressed by the construction of

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Minzhudeguo jiankuang ji zhongguo yu minde guanxi 民主德国简况及中国与民德关系 [Brief introduction of the GDR and China's relations with it], 27 June 1958, 204-00617-02(1). FM AC.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Auszüge aus einem Gespräch mit Marschall Peng Te-huai, anlässlich der Vorstellung des Militär-Attaches der DDR am Sonnabend, dem 3.8.1957, DVW 1/6384, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (hereafter cited as BA-MA).

47 Bericht über die Reise der Delegation der Nationalen Volksarmee der DDR in der VRG, 11.10.1957, DVW 1/6383, BA-MA.

socialism in China: 'there is an unlimited passion among the officers, sergeants and rank-and-file soldiers. It is the result of a successful political education'.⁴⁸ Stoph went further in declaring that what the delegation had found in China could help the NVA in the future.⁴⁹ Other delegates, after returning to the GDR, made several speeches on the dual executive system (双首长制 *shuang shou-zhang zhi*) of the PIA, stressing that it was through this system that the party could exercise its influence over the armed forces. In China, this system meant that the party secretary enjoyed equality of position with the commanders of the armed forces. The armed forces thus had, in fact, two heads.⁵⁰ This was different from the Soviet one-head leadership system.

After this visit, Stoph introduced to the GDR the model of the Chinese Central Military Commission (CMC), which was established in 1925 and had the power to command the Chinese armed forces. He suggested that a military organ should be established that would allow the General Secretary of the SED to exert more influence on the NVA. Therefore, the Nationaler Verteidigungsrat (National Defence Council) of the GDR was established on 10 February 1960 with Ulbricht as its first chairman.⁵¹ Meanwhile, China's prestige expanded in the NVA. It was referred to as the 'Giant in the Far East' in an internal exhibition of the NVA held in December 1957. In the NVA's 1958 military manoeuvres, the names of the PIA observers were listed in second place, only after the Soviet Union and before all the other socialist brother-countries.⁵² What Stoph had seen and learned in China helped introduce two major threads of the PIA's Mass Line policy to the GDR after he went back: officers going down to the (military) company and/or working in the production unit of a state-run enterprise.

3 Going Down to the Company

A core element of the PIA's Mass Line was to send officers to the companies to serve as soldiers. The officers were expected to eat, live and drill with the rank-and-file soldiers. The SED followed the Chinese example and introduced

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Stophs Begrüßungsansprache zur Eröffnung der Chinesischen Ausstellung, DVW 1/2019, BA-MA.

⁵⁰ Liu Hanli 刘汉利, 'Tingdang zhihui yu nengda shengzhang de tongyi: junzheng shou-zhang fengong fuzezhi de lishi jiedu' 听党指挥与能打胜仗的统一:军政首长分工负责制的历史解读 [A historical analysis of the division of labour between the military and political heads of the PIA], *Wenshi bolan* 文史博览, no. 5 (2014): pp. 10–12.

⁵¹ Hemen Ray, 'Die ideologische Achse Peking-Pankow', *Außenpolitik* 11 (1960): pp. 819–825.

⁵² Befehl Nr.213/58, MfS-BdL/Dok 000513, Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes (BStU).

it in the NVA, and this caused problems within the armed forces, such as discontentment from both officers and soldiers and the damage it caused to war preparations. As part of the Mass Line within the PIA, in September 1958, the General Political Department of the PIA followed Mao's instruction that PIA officers should serve as rank-and-file soldiers for at least one month a year. From Mao's perspective, this would enhance the relationship between the officers and soldiers, and thereby benefit war preparations.⁵³

Since the Chinese experiences and Mass Line had already been lauded at the fifth Congress, the SED decided to keep up with their Chinese comrades. At the fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED, held between 15 and 17 November 1959, Walter Ulbricht gave a speech on how to improve the party's working style.⁵⁴ Following Ulbricht's instruction, a proposal from the Defence Ministry was discussed at the SED Politburo meeting on 20 January 1959. This proposal called on NVA officers under the age of fifty to serve as soldiers in the companies for four weeks in any year.⁵⁵ With regards to the daily life of the officers, while serving in the ranks, the Defence Ministry stressed that the officers could not enjoy more benefits than the regular soldiers. They had to eat, live and work with the soldiers, and even dress like them.⁵⁶

In the Chinese official history of the Mass Line, the PIA officers who went down to the companies enjoyed a harmonious life with the soldiers, which ended in 'promoting the development of the PIA'.⁵⁷ However, according to the East German documents, the reality in the NVA was totally different. The officer-soldier relationships inside the NVA were rather lopsided. Generally, the higher-ranking officers had authority over daily affairs, and the soldiers were expected to obey the rules and decisions made by the officers. Consequently, when the officers had to serve in the ranks in line with the Mass Line, the first thing they would always face in the companies was the issue of how to get along with their fellow soldiers. Major Rudi Scherze, formerly in charge of political propaganda work in the army, spent four weeks in a company stationed in Dessau. In the

53 Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi bianxiezu 中国人民解放军军史编写组, ed., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi* 中国人民解放军军史 [The history of the PIA], Vol. 1 (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 2010), pp. 250–252.

54 Aus dem Referat Walter Ulbrichts auf der 4. Tagung des ZK der SED 15–17.11.1959, DY 30/IV 2/1/215, SAPMO-Barch.

55 Vorlage für die Politbürositzung vom 20. Januar 1959, DVW 1/7356, BA-MA.

56 Grundsätze über den jährlich 4 wöchigen Dienst der Offiziere der NVA als Soldaten in den Kompanien, DVW 1/7536, BA-MA.

57 Zhao Zhanhao 赵占豪, '1958: Gaoji Jiangling Xialian Dangbing' 1958: 高级将领下连当兵 [1958: high-ranking PIA officials going down to the military companies], *Jiefangjunbao* 解放军报, 8.5.2013.

first days of his company life, Scherze found that nearly all the soldiers cold-shouldered him.⁵⁸

The officers, too, were generally against this initiative. Some of them refused to serve in the ranks.⁵⁹ They believed that it would harm their authority in the armed forces and was pointless. Hans Fricke, a former NVA officer remembered: 'nobody wants to take the lead to serve as a soldier and everyone has his own excuse'.⁶⁰ Many officers regarded this policy as 'copying the Chinese experiences mechanically and having not given enough considerations to the characteristics of the German people'.⁶¹ This wave of discontent was mirrored among the soldiers. NVA soldiers were used to obeying orders from those in authority. Now that high-ranking officers seemed to have lost their authority, some soldiers put it bluntly: 'if I were a Major, I would never allow any common soldiers to make derogatory remarks against me'.⁶²

Despite these problems, the SED stuck to this policy and received support from the PIA, which sent delegations to the GDR to instruct their German comrades. In May 1959, Marshal Peng Dehuai went to East Germany, and during his visit to the 9th Panzer Division shared his experiences of the PIA's dual executive system. He told the East Germans that 'when the leaders of the company do not know what to do, the rank-and-file soldiers might help. This is why we believe that political and military education in the armed forces is a two-way process. The officers and soldiers should learn from each other'.⁶³ The next day, Peng visited the Friedrich Engels Military Academy in Dresden, where he talked with the leading cadres of the academy, and then wrote down his views on the Mass Line movement in the NVA. Peng stressed that unity between superiors and subordinates, officers and soldiers, the armed forces and the masses should be an essential characteristic of the NVA: 'from my perspective, this should be the basic principle for the Military Academy'.⁶⁴

Following a resolution of the SED, five officers from the Engels Academy served as private soldiers in 1959, including one Major and four Lieutenants, all

58 Brief von Wronski an den Minister für NV, 6.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

59 Deutscher Bundestag, ed., *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission 'Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland'*, Teilband II/3 (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), p. 1953.

60 Storkmann, *Das Chinesische Prinzip in der NVA*, p. 37.

61 Ibid., pp. 118–119.

62 Ibid., p. 39.

63 Peng is quoted in: Wang Yan 王焰, ed., *Peng Dehuai nianpu* 彭德怀年谱 [A chronicle of Peng Dehuai] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1998), p. 728.

64 Wang Yan, *Peng Dehuai nianpu*, p. 728.

of whom had already served in the armed forces for more than ten years.⁶⁵ The Major was sent to the 7th Artillery Regiment (AR7), while the four lieutenants were sent to the 7th Motorized Infantry Regiment (MSR7). Both regiments were stationed in Dresden. However, upon arrival, these officers were soon confronted with the same problems as the officers serving in other companies, including cold-shouldering from fellow soldiers. The soldiers believed that 'the reason why officers choose to go down to the company is to strengthen their control over us'.⁶⁶ However, when the soldiers saw that the officers were also actively engaged in tidying up the dormitory or even stood guard, they felt that 'the officers' dignity is destroyed by serving as soldiers'.⁶⁷ Some NCOs complained that the arrival of the higher-lever officers made them feel inferior and their work became devalued in the company: 'Now that the officers have arrived, I finally have time to start my vacation', as an NCO sarcastically observed.⁶⁸

After having encountered so many problems, high-ranking NVA officers demanded adjustments to the policy. Major General Heinrich Heitsch, the vice commander of the Engels Academy, suggested in his letter to Stoph that it would be better if academy officers could serve not as common soldiers but as squad leaders: 'this is because squad leaders are a vital part of the socialist group among young soldiers. It would be helpful, especially in dealing with the relations with the soldiers'.⁶⁹

In this letter, Heitsch also raised other issues. Firstly, officers above the age of forty should, in his view, only serve as logistics officers in the company, 'because they are not competent for all the tasks any more, which might overshadow their exemplary role in the company'.⁷⁰ Secondly, young officers who had served in the same company previously should not serve as private soldiers in the same unit: 'These officers should go down to the other companies, so that their prestige in their former companies would not be damaged'.⁷¹ Thirdly, Heitsch reserved his views on the Defence Ministry's 4/59 order issued on 1 October 1959, which stated that the cadets at the Academy should begin their

65 Brief von Generalmajor Heitsch an Stoph, 12.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

service as private soldiers immediately. He thought that this was unreasonable because it was bound to shorten the time allocated to teaching and learning at the academy.⁷²

Major General Blech of the 5th Military Region also suggested making adjustments. In his letter to the NVA's cadre administration, he pointed out that four weeks of service in the company was sufficient to understand soldiers' lives and it should be up to the officers to choose in which company they served. In addition, replacements for their former positions should be found before they embarked on their secondment to the ranks. He went even further, saying that the full assignment of the officers into units would not only seriously damage the war preparation of the armed forces, but also harm the work of the military command.⁷³

By sending the NVA officers to the companies, the SED had wanted, essentially, to improve the relationships between officers and soldiers, while eliminating bureaucracy. Despite the CCP's support, officers' relations with soldiers proved difficult to improve and many officers, including high-ranking Generals, had severe reservations about the whole concept. Moreover, its damage to the war preparation of the NVA forced some high-ranking NVA officers to demand adjustments to the policy.

4 Working in the Enterprises

Another introduction of China's Mass Line to the NVA was that of sending officers to different sectors of the economy, such as state-run industrial, agricultural and forestry enterprises, to enable them to gain experience of socialist production practices. As with the policy of serving in the ranks, forcing officers to work in these state-run enterprises severely jeopardised war preparations, because of the great number of officers on secondment from their positions. Moreover, it increased the financial burden on the NVA due to the heavy costs of the officers as labour forces. These two factors became the primary domestic reasons for the repeal of the Mass Line in the early 1960s.

On 30 July 1958, the SED Politburo's Security Commission⁷⁴ passed a resolution that all cadets of the Military Academy without one year of work experience should be sent to the enterprises for twelve months after completion

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Brief von Chef des Kommandos des Militärbezirk v, Bleck an Verwaltung Kader des MNV 13.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

⁷⁴ It was transformed into the Nationaler Verteidigungsrat of the GDR on 13 February 1960.

of study.⁷⁵ On 3 October, the Defence Ministry issued its 6/58 directive to include other NVA officers. The directive explained the reasons for this policy as being that the SED wanted to 'strengthen the combat capacity of the NVA by strengthening its socialist consciousness and its loyalty to the working class'.⁷⁶ The only way to realise this aim, it was contended, was to ensure NVA officers' participation in the 'practical production experiences'. These officers were expected to participate actively in the activities of the party or trade union (Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund), and to strengthen the unity between the NVA and the working people through their outstanding discipline and working habits.⁷⁷

Since 1949, a major political task of the GDR state run enterprises had been to implement the SED's social policy in addition to fulfilling its daily production quota.⁷⁸ This was the main reason why the enterprises accepted the NVA officers, most of whom had little to offer in terms of work skills. The officers' participation in the enterprises was referred to by the central administration of the NVA as a form of 'social work'.⁷⁹ This meant that the selected officers should try their best to fulfil a political mission.

From the declassified internal reports of the NVA it is clear that the differences between officers were extensive, especially in relation to personal attitudes and the impact of their work. Some did work very hard and were perceived as model workers because of their well-organized, party-trade union, and their work in the factories, and a number were rewarded by both the enterprise and the NVA. Major General Hessler, the deputy commander of the NVA regional command in Halle, for instance, established close relationships with his fellow workers. His exemplary work in the factory helped to attract the interest of young men, and he succeeded in recruiting five young men for the NVA from the factory.⁸⁰

Others, too, were seen as model NVA officers because of their hard work in the enterprises. Sub-lieutenant Heilmann from the 7th Panzer Division had had no work experience before he came to the state enterprise 'Progress' in

75 Protokoll der Sitzung der Sicherheitskommission des ZK der SED vom 30 Juli 1958, DVW 1/39564, BA-MA.

76 Direktive des Ministers für Nationale Verteidigung Nr. 6/58, 3.10.1958, DVW 1/4372, BA-MA.

77 Ibid.

78 Peter Hübner, 'Diktatur und Betrieb in der frühen DDR (1949–1961)', in *Vor dem Mauerbau, Politik und Gesellschaft in der DDR der fünfziger Jahre*, edited by Dierk Hoffmann, Michael Schwartz and Hermann Wentker (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003), p. 133.

79 Erfahrungsbericht über die Direktive 11/58 des Ministers für Nationale Verteidigung, 16.6.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

80 Ibid.

Bischofswerda, a well-known harvester factory in the GDR. He accommodated himself to the life and work there, and was viewed as a model worker by his fellow workers. He was then commended by the factory leader and the commander of the local military region. As a remuneration, he was paid 500 marks a month.⁸¹

Not every NVA officer was a model worker like Heilmann though, and it is very likely that in some cases, the officers failed to live up to the SED's expectations. Some were even punished by the factories for which they worked. Sub-lieutenant Wolfgang Rosemeyer from the 4th Motorized Infantry Division was such an example. In 1959, Rosemeyer worked for six months at a state construction enterprise, where he was a member of a socialist brigade comprised of young workers. The enterprise's party commission had always hoped that Rosemeyer would set an example for the young men through his hard work. Rosemeyer, however, tended to behave rather negatively. At an internal session with his fellow brigade workers, Rosemeyer was asked by his superior to make a statement on the Berlin Crisis. He declined to do so, which was perceived by the authorities as not fulfilling his obligation to propagate the SED's policy. Even his private affairs aroused the dissatisfaction of the NVA commanders. General Wagner wrote in his letter to the cadre department of the NVA that Rosemeyer 'was showing great disrespect for his family'.⁸² His wife was in urgent need of economic assistance, but he had not sent money home for a long time. Only after the intervention of the party commission of the factory did he begin to remit funds home again. What was worse, Rosemeyer stole a radio from fellow workers and kept listening to western radio in the dormitory. According to this report, the commander of the 24th Motorized Infantry Regiment finally learned about Rosemeyer's performances in the enterprise and 'took measures against him'.⁸³

Rosemeyer was not the only officer who had unfortunate experiences during their work at the enterprises. Sub-lieutenant Ziebarth was also found to have listened to western radio⁸⁴ and to have been indifferent towards collective activities with fellow workers. Ziebarth was removed from the list of probationary members of the SED, and then dismissed from military service in

81 Ibid. In the late 1950s, the average monthly income of East German workers in the industrial sector was approximately 478 marks. See Oskar Schwarzer, *Sozialistische Zentralplanwirtschaft in der SBZ/DDR* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), pp. 178–179.

82 Ibid.

83 As is inferred from the context of this document, these measures could be very harshly punished. See *ibid.*

84 From the context, it seems highly probable that both Rosemeyer and Ziebarth were listening to West German radio.

July 1959.⁸⁵ Although lukewarm attitudes toward political affairs and attraction to western life were not uncommon traits among fellow workers, the SED authorities were harsher with the NVA officers, because they were expected to set an example in the factories.

Besides the issues created by disobedient officers, the policy also turned out to be a heavy financial burden for the cash-strapped East German government. Now that the officers were required to be dressed like workers, even the supply of their work clothes became a problem for the NVA. The departments in charge of sending the officers to the enterprises wrote letters to Stoph, asking if the NVA could pay for these clothes.⁸⁶

The welfare issues were more difficult to deal with. Reports from one East German military region suggested that all the officers working for one year in the enterprises should enjoy minimum income support at least. This meant that the minimum income of the officers would equal the income of the IV or V wage group in the GDR, which was approximately 400–500 marks per month.⁸⁷ As most of the officers chose to go on vocational training for two to three months at the beginning of their work experience, they could only attract a wage of 250–300 marks every month.⁸⁸ This meant that the officers faced the possibility of severe economic difficulties during the first months of the secondment. Therefore, Major Klempin, commander of the College of Automotive Technology, suggested that officers working in an enterprise for five months or more should be given more financial aid.⁸⁹

The rewards in the enterprises were generally unsatisfactory, with a few exceptions. Sub-lieutenant Hans Fischer was awarded a trip to Bulgaria for his diligent work at the SDAG-Wismut, a uranium mining company which was the fourth largest producer of uranium ore in the world.⁹⁰ However, such examples were very rare among NVA officers. Most of them were not able to obtain a traveller's cheque from the enterprises for which they worked.⁹¹ Normally, only a small group of workers could acquire such cheques from the trade union, let

85 Berichterstattung der Chefs der Bezirkskommandos über die Durchführung der Direktive 6/58 9.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

86 Bericht über den Einsatz von Offizier als Soldat in der Truppe und in der sozialistischen Produktion, 8.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

87 Bericht über den zeitweiligen Einsatz von Offizieren in der sozialistischen Produktion, 10.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

88 Berichterstattung der Chefs der Bezirkskommandos über die Durchführung der Direktive 6/58 9.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

89 Brief von Major Klempin an Stoph, 5.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

90 Berichterstattung der Chefs der Bezirkskommandos über die Durchführung der Direktive 6/58 9.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

91 Ibid.

alone the NVA officers who only worked for a short period of time.⁹² Moreover, the Mass Line movement brought chaos to the military command, administration and training system of the NVA. The reports from various military districts showed that war preparation work was greatly undermined by the policy. For example, due to the disruption caused by one month of serving as soldiers and workers, the rate of some military commands and leading positions fell to only sixty-five per cent. The Air Force reported that a one-month interruption of training might cause the flying skills of the pilots to deteriorate.⁹³

Major General Heitsch was highly sceptical of the effects and results of the NVA officers' participation in the state-run enterprises. He wrote a letter to Stoph on 9 October 1959, suggesting that the Academy should be able to allocate all officers below the rank of Colonel to the task of creating a socialist production system, and that the secondment of the Academy's officers should only take place every two years.⁹⁴

Shortly after reading these reports, the SED ruling elite accepted a compromise. In the Second Session of the National Defence Council, which was held in June 1960, Ulbricht finally agreed to the request from the Ministry of Defence to adjust the policy. Pilots, medical technicians and radar technicians were from then on exempt from participation in the construction of socialism in the factories or from serving as private soldiers. At the same time, in each military command, the number of officers participating in the scheme was reduced so as not to exceed twenty-five per cent in any year.⁹⁵

5 Conclusion

No records were found relating to the participation of NVA officers in the Mass Line movement after July 1960, when fifty officers from the 3rd military district returned to their companies.⁹⁶ Intense ideological debates inside the socialist bloc played an important role in these changes. In particular, the ideological debates between the CCP and the SED in the early 1960s were highly significant. Referring to the Chinese efforts to propagate the People's Communes at

92 Ibid.

93 Bericht und Vorschläge zur Durchführung des Beschlusses vom 20.1.1959 über die zeitweilige Dienstleistung der Offiziere, Generale und Admirale als Soldat bzw. Unteroffizier in der Truppe, 1960, DVW 1/39459, BA-MA.

94 Brief von Heitsch an Stoph 9.10.1959, DVW 1/2375, BA-MA.

95 Protokoll der 2. Sitzung des Nationalen Verteidigungsrates der DDR am 15. Juni 1960, DVW 1/39459/01, BA-MA.

96 Storkmann, *Das Chinesische Prinzip in der NVA*, pp. 36–37.

a trade fair near Leipzig in 1960, Ulbricht himself criticised the CCP for its interference in the GDR's internal affairs, pointing out that 'your road of development is not fit for the other countries'.⁹⁷ At the same time, East-West relations were also deteriorating, which required the NVA to improve its work on war preparations immediately, which Ulbricht declared to be the NVA's new major task in 1961.⁹⁸ In this context, it seemed that the SED could no longer continue the Mass Line in the NVA.

On 1 February 1961, General Heinz Hoffmann, Stoph's successor as the Defence Minister of the GDR, issued directive 1/61. After evaluating the results of the movement of officers serving as soldiers in the ranks and gaining production experience in the enterprises of the GDR in the previous two years, this directive announced that 'the SED will not consider continuing the past policies' and, 'from now on, the NVA officers do not need to serve as soldiers in the company and work in the enterprise to gain socialist production experiences anymore'.⁹⁹ With this directive, the Mass Line in the NVA formally came to an end.

Since the beginning of the 1960s, the NVA had been improving military professional skills rather than focusing on political work among its officers. The preeminent NVA officers were sent to military academies in the Soviet Union for education and training.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, for those in the NVA officer corps who had experienced the Mass Line movement, both the increase of 'Socialist Consciousness' and the elimination of bureaucracy were hard to achieve. That is not to say that the SED's ambitious plan of achieving unity between the common soldiers and officers was without merit. However, the SED's main reason for promoting the Mass Line in the NVA, that is to bring about specific results identified at the start of this movement – improving the relations between the officers and soldiers, party and the masses, promoting the war preparation of the NVA and the socialist construction in the GDR – was not fulfilled.

From the perspective of international relations, the SED's taking on board of the Chinese Mass Line demonstrated the GDR's room for manoeuvre in dealing with China in the late 1950s as an intra-bloc leadership contender to the Soviet Union. During these years, the SED was free to introduce Chinese ideological experiments to the GDR, knowing that these experiments were non-Soviet.

97 Ulbricht is quoted in: Werner Meißner, ed., *Die DDR und China, 1949 bis 1990. Politik-Wirtschaft-Kultur. Eine Quellensammlung* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 118–119.

98 Storkmann, *Das Chinesische Prinzip in der NVA*, p. 52.

99 Anordnung des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung Nr. 6/61 vom 1.2.1961, DVW 1/6904, BA-MA.

100 Klaus Froh and Rüdiger Wenzke, *Die Generäle und Admirale der NVA* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2000), pp. 17–20.

The sharpening ideological debates with China, however, made it no longer possible for the SED to implement Chinese practices in its own armed forces.

German scholars tend to believe that the NVA officers were generally not able to resist the Mass Line Movement.¹⁰¹ In the declassified East German archival records, it is indeed hard to find any open criticism of the Mass Line among the NVA officers. The reports written by them are almost entirely full of eulogies on the benefits of the movement. However, the more recent trend in GDR studies has shown the limitations of the communist party's influence in society.¹⁰² This chapter has provided evidence that the SED's power in the NVA was rather limited. Although the party leadership was able to lay down and implement the Mass Line in the NVA, it could not push it any further, not least because it caused conflicts between the professional officers and the ideological movement, the enterprises and the NVA. It also turned out that this movement mitigated against war preparation work.

The complaints and grievances aired by the officers via letters, if voiced openly, would only have been received negatively by the NVA. Consequently, concerned about their own career and life, the officers seldom vented direct criticism and chose to put up with the movement.¹⁰³ Another important factor was that the SED adopted a quiet policy against the repeal of the Mass Line in the NVA.¹⁰⁴ Despite all this, this chapter has shown that there were some high-ranking officers who dared to express their reservations about the Mass Line concept, presumably because of their professional military responsibilities. Additionally, the Mass Line movement increased the financial burden on the NVA. The SED had to address new and complex problems such as military uniforms, dispatch, transport, income and welfare of the officers. In summary, the development of the Mass Line in the NVA caused difficult internal problems for the SED to deal with which, together with the looming Sino-Soviet split, led to its final repeal in the early 1960s.

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¹⁰¹ Fingerle, *Waffen in Arbeiterhand*, p. 182.

¹⁰² See Dolores L. Augustine, 'The Power Question in GDR History', *German Studies Review* 34, no. 3 (2011): pp. 633–652; Sandrine Kott, *Communism Day-to-Day: State Enterprises in East German Society* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2014).

¹⁰³ Hans-Georg Löffler, *Erinnerungen 1955–1990* (Bissendorf: Biblio Verlag, 2002), pp. 38–39.

¹⁰⁴ Fingerle, *Waffen in Arbeiterhand*, p. 182.

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